

JACOB'S SONS

GEORGE L. PETRIE



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BY
GEORGE L. PETRIE, D. D.



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INTRODUCTION

THE forty-ninth chapter of Genesis is very picturesque. It has preserved for ages a group of family portraits. Jacob was the artist; his sons the subjects of his art. The patriarch, when about to die, assembled his twelve sons and spoke parting words to them. These words are pictures of the men. They have been called Jacob's Blessings on his Sons. The father, with a present discernment and a far-reaching vision, portrayed their characters and prophesied their destinies. To the patriarch each son presented striking peculiarities. Jacob assigned to each an appropriate symbol, a mirror of his life, showing what he was and what he was to be, reflecting character and destiny. These portraits, prophecies, symbols, have a tribal as well as a personal reference. They afford glimpses of the men and of their tribes.

This book is an interpretation of the patriarchal scene. The purpose of these studies is to note the correspondence between these portraits and the men and tribes they represent; to find the agreements between the forward reach of the patriarch's words and the recorded facts of Israel's subsequent his-

tory; to trace the symbol in the life of each son and of his tribe.

The views presented in the following pages were originally given in a course of Sunday Evening Biblical Lectures. The form of public address has been preserved.

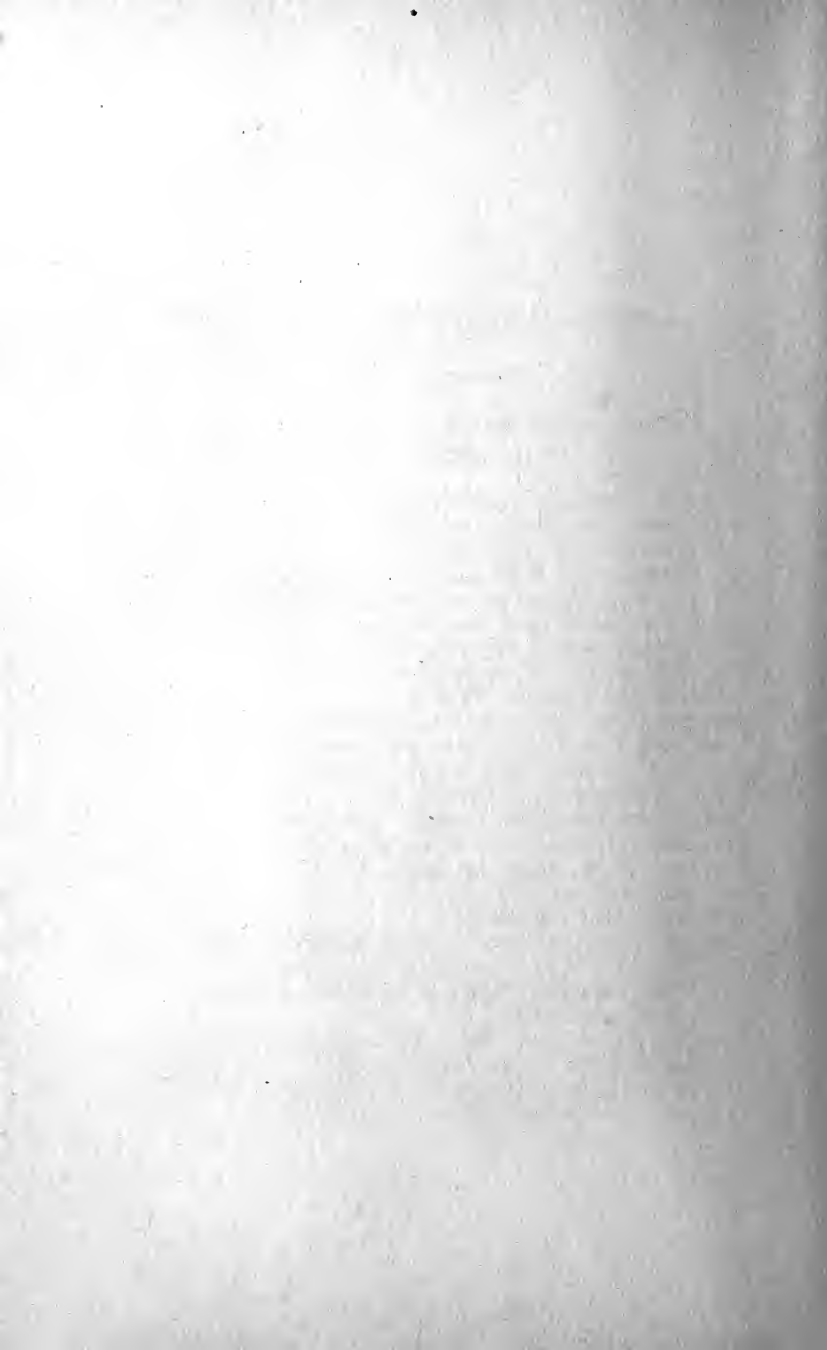
GEORGE L. PETRIE.

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JACOB'S BLESSINGS ON HIS SONS

Genesis 49: 1—28.

“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my firstborn,
My might, and the beginning of my strength,
The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:
Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel;
Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed;
Then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

Simeon and Levi are brethren;
Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.
O my soul, come not thou into their secret;
Unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united:
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their selfwill they digged down a wall.
Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce;
And their wrath, for it was cruel:
I will divide them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise:
Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies;
Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.
Judah is a lion's whelp:
From the prey, my son, thou art gone up:
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,
And as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?
The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,

Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh come;
And unto him shall the gathering of the people be.
Binding his foal unto the vine,
And his ass's colt unto the choice vine;
He washed his garments in wine,
And his clothes in the blood of grapes:
His eyes shall be red with wine,
And his teeth white with milk.

Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea;
And he shall be for a haven of ships;
And his border shall be unto Zidon.

Issachar is a strong ass
Couching down between two burdens:
And he saw that rest was good,
And the land that it was pleasant;
And bowed his shoulders to bear,
And became a servant unto tribute.

Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.
Dan shall be a serpent by the way,
An adder in the path,
That biteth the horse heels,
So that his rider shall fall backward.
I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.

Gad, a troop shall overcome him:
But he shall overcome at the last.

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,
And he shall yield royal dainties.

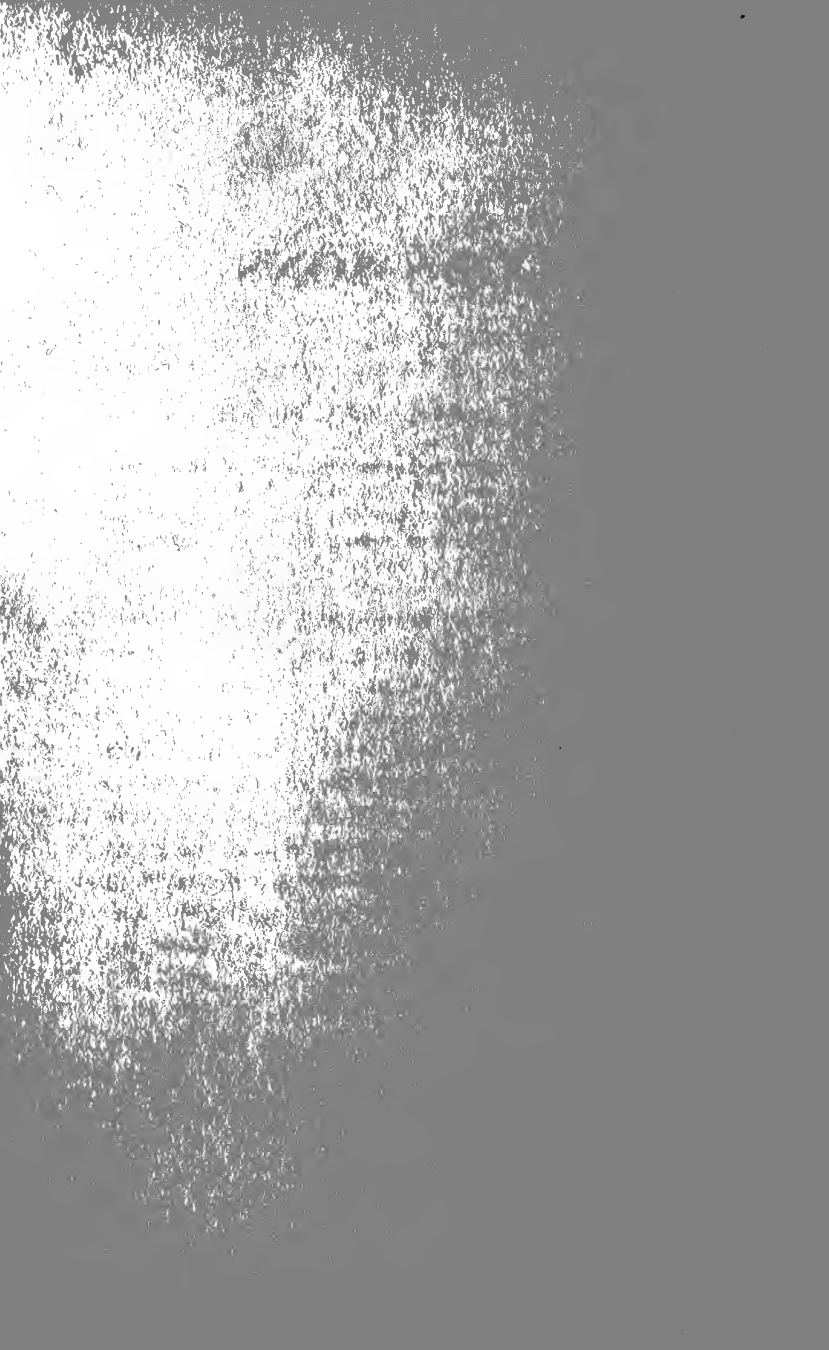
Naphtali is a hind let loose:
He giveth goodly words.

Joseph is a fruitful bough,
Even a fruitful bough by a well;
Whose branches run over the wall:
The archers have sorely grieved him,
And shot at him, and hated him:
But his bow abode in strength,
And the arms of his hands were made strong

By the hands of the mighty God of Jacob;
From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:
Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee;
And by the Almighty, who shall bless thee
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lieth under,
Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:
The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings
of my progenitors
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:
They shall be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him that was separate
from his brethren.

Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf:
In the morning he shall devour the prey,
And at night he shall divide the spoil.

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it
that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every
one according to his blessing he blessed them."



JACOB'S SONS

I

JACOB: PATRIARCH, POET, PROPHET

“And Jacob called unto his sons and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.”—
GEN. 49: 1-2.

THE Book of Genesis is unique. It is the oldest book in existence. It is brief, but includes in its record a multitude of years. It represents more than one-third of human history. Its record covers about twenty-three hundred years. All subsequent history embraces about thirty-six hundred years.

Genesis is a gallery of pictures. On its pages men and nations in rapid succession pass before us in review. Its gathered scenes are selections from the rich materials which the world affords. Between its scenes sometimes ages roll. Of these intervals often there is no mention made. It is the ancient world's Westminster Abbey, where eminence only is entombed. Among all the famous groups that are pictured in this gallery of ancient art one of the most noted is that to which now we

turn: *Jacob, the dying patriarch, and his assembled sons.* We purpose to study this picture in detail, so we shall come somewhat to know the men and learn the lessons which the artistic grouping of them is designed to teach. Jacob the dying father is the central figure of the picture. The first subject that invites our attention, therefore, is *Jacob, the patriarch, poet, and prophet.*

I.—JACOB THE PATRIARCH

The scene on which we look, with the incident which it records, marks the close of what is called the patriarchal period of human history. Here the family with its paternal rule merges into the national existence and government. In this sense Jacob is the last of the patriarchs. Abraham is succeeded by Isaac, to whom the patriarchal treasures go. Isaac is succeeded by Jacob, on whom the patriarchal blessings fall. But Jacob, dying, gathers around him all his sons, bestows his blessing on them all, and through them on the tribes which they represent. Jacob is succeeded by the Tribes of Israel, to which the sons of the last patriarch give their names and characters. The transition thus introduced renders this scene important. It marks an epoch in the roll of ages.

Jacob is sick. He calls his sons to him. About to pass away, the father would pronounce a bless-

ing on his sons. They gather at his bedside. Only men are present. The women who have often graced the patriarchal scenes are not mentioned in the record. Leah and Rachel have already died; and Dinah is not mentioned here. In times of sorrow, sickness, suffering, death, the tender ministries of women are oftenest found and most highly valued. They are wanting here. It is a gathering of men. We see only the father and his sons.

Unlike Abraham and Isaac, Jacob is the head of a large family of sons. Among them great peculiarities of character are found. Their temperaments varied. Not more unlike were Jacob and Esau than were these sons of Israel. Hence, the family life was not always peaceful, its history by no means always smooth. Antagonistic traits sometimes created storms. Turbulence sometimes reigned. The calm of human life was sometimes ruffled by tumultuous scenes. It was a checkered life they lived. Dissensions often marred their happiness and produced sad separations.

But now they have come together once more. It is with them the great event that always brings the family together, when possible, though they are scattered far; that calms the storm, however it may have raged; that hushes complaint, however loudly spoken; that reconciles the disaffected, however wide the breach. Death is drawing near. All

gather as brothers, because as sons they assemble at the dying patriarch's side.

Jacob knows his sons as no other knows them. He has watched them with a father's discerning eye. Abundant opportunities his have been to learn them well. Jacob is a most discerning man. Through all the years, in all the varying scenes, by all the changing lights, amid all the many strange events, he has read their lives. His heart has treasured many things all others have forgot. Out of these treasured facts, gathered by observation, profoundly considered in lonely hours, in his own mind he has sketched the character of each son. Now all that they have been, are, and are likely to become stands out in bold relief as a living scene to the patriarch's mind. Blind though he has come to be, the eye of the mind with undimmed vision beholds each son. As they stand around him, he more clearly sees them with this better vision than they behold their dying father.

No two men are ever quite alike. But were ever men more divergent in their characters than these sons of Jacob? Family resemblances there usually are. But amid resemblances individualities also will appear. Now let us hear the father state what are the personal peculiarities of these men, his sons.

The dying hour is an honest hour. Jacob gathers his sons around him, not to speak flattering

words, not to deal in generalities which cannot profit them; but to speak to them helpful words, worthy to be treasured as a father's last counsel. It is his last opportunity, and he surely makes wise use of it. No nobler tribute can be paid to Jacob than is contained in the record of his farewell counsel to his sons. He has finely pictured the men. With the strokes of a master he has portrayed each son, and made him stand before us in perpetual life. Some of the old painters so excelled in their noble art that as we look on the pictures they portrayed we are almost convinced that we can move among the persons depicted, and pass around them, in such bold relief they seem to stand. At Jacob's touch, by his vivid sketch, these princes of the tribes stand out to our view almost as living men. We almost forget that we are looking on a picture touched rudely by the hand of time and darkened by the dimming distance that intervenes.

The dying hour is a loving hour. It is the hour when the paternal heart wells up with tenderest love. Gather the sons, for the patriarch is dying. He would breathe his love upon them ere he departs. He wishes to have them near. His heart is breaking with the love he bears his children now. Jacob's words are called his Blessings on his sons. At first thought some of them seem scarcely named aright. But this may be noticed—that Jacob gives to each all that he is fitted to receive. Whatever

limitation there is, is in the son, not in the father: a limit of capacity to receive, not of kindness to bestow. The character of each regulates the blessing beyond Jacob's power to change. The characters men make are the exact measurements of the blessings the men can receive.

These words of Jacob are words of revelation. In no event of his life does his mental vigor appear to greater advantage than in these discriminating blessings on his sons. They doubtless knew themselves better, knew one another better, as they are better known to us, by reason of these character sketches which the dying patriarch gave.

II.—JACOB THE POET

This patriarchal benediction is a poem. All that constitutes Hebrew poetry has here a place. What is poetry? This is a question which has not lacked discussion. It is a question which has not been answered to general satisfaction yet. All are well agreed that poetry does not consist in rhyme, else every man might be a poet. Nor yet does it consist in measure, else it were but a mathematical attainment. Neither rhyme nor measure is a feature of Hebrew poetry. We may recognize poetry and feel its power and admire its beauty, though it be still by us undefined. Except Lamech's "Song of the Sword," a mere fragment, the most ancient

poem known is Jacob's Blessings on his sons. A thousand years before Homer sang his *Iliad*, that splendid wail of woes, Jacob breathed this Song of Blessings on his sons. The blind bard of Israel was ancient by a millennium when the blind old man of Greece wove his wondrous stories into the songs that ever since have charmed the world.

The bird of Orpheus, it is said, meets death with song. As death draws near it tunes its voice to a sweeter, happier note. It dies to its own sweet music. There is many a swanlike song of human voice, at whose conclusion the singer takes his final flight. In Jacob's song he bids the world adieu. This noble singer with the last cadence of his voice goes, but leaves his other self, the noble song, to linger down the ages to delight the world while music has its charms.

To this poem of the patriarch belong what are better far than measure, rhyme, or rhythm—noble thought, elevated style, beautiful imagery, artistic arrangement. To each son a symbol is assigned, which is at once expressive of his character and prophetic of his destiny. Each symbol also sets forth a tribal character and destiny.

III.—JACOB THE PROPHET

A prophet Jacob claims to be: "That I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days."

This poem, then, is offered to us as a prophetic glimpse of the coming days. But here certain critics come with their work of demolition; who would bring every high thing down, and pluck crowns from the brows that long have worn them well. It is their chief delight to deny. When men are found who would uncrown England's greatest bard, we need not be surprised that there are those who now deny that Jacob ever breathed this little song or uttered these brief prophecies. Well, why? Is it because these words have proved themselves so true and have been so remarkably fulfilled? Had the song proved false, false to the coming days, false to their prophetic claim, would any voice ever have been raised to deny that Jacob sang this little song to his assembled sons? With great delight such iconoclasts most likely would have spared no pains to bind the false prophecy forever to the patriarch's name.

Shall we believe that at some later day this poem was foisted on Israel's literature, claiming its ancient authorship and date? This would have been a difficult achievement if all its words were praise; but it seems impossible when the poem reflects unfavorably on certain tribes. These tribes surely would have detected the design in its inception, and proclaimed the imposture to the world. It seems easier far to accept the facts and face any difficulties they may suggest than to invent new

theories which introduce greater difficulties than those from which we try to make escape.

The death-hour somehow seems to rend the veil that shuts off our vision of better things and coming days. There are prophets who are prophets all their days. There are prophets who, like Jacob, see afar as the flickering spark flares up ere into deeper darkness it goes forever out. Certain pagan sages of the olden time declared that in approaching death man drew near the state in which he has most the foreseeing power, and that the soul catches some glimpse of the future just as it is departing from the body. The true poet is a prophet. In his loftier soaring he sees farther and more clearly than they who walk earth's lowly plains.

As the patriarch dies, each word he speaks, luminous with clearer vision, larger view, nobler height, and keener discernment, is an open window through which the light of heaven shines on this darkened world. In the gleam of this heavenly light we may catch glimpses of the coming days.

II

REUBEN

“ Reuben, thou art my firstborn,
My might, and the beginning of my strength,
The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power :
Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel ;
Because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed ;
Then defiledst thou it : he went up to my couch.”

—GEN. 49: 3-4.

THERE are three great roll-calls of the tribes of Israel. They are full of significance in themselves and in the circumstances of the calls. The first is by the dying Jacob, into whose presence his sons come as individuals, from whom they go forth as the heads of tribes. The second is by the dying Moses, before whom the tribes pass in review. The third is by the dying chimes of Revelation, where the great consummation is recorded. The first is prophecy; the second history; the third judgment. Surely by the aid of these three reckonings we may with some fullness trace the men whose course is thus marked out. The prophecy, the history, the sealing recorded for us: how do these three agree? There are no more specific prophecies in the Bible

than these which are contained in the Tribal Blessings. The facts of Israel's history are not wanting. It becomes therefore a very interesting inquiry, how far the history fulfills the prophecy. This surely is a subject which invites investigation. It is quite surprising to find that it is comparatively an untrodden field. At most it has been but touched—touched lightly. No extensive work seems to have been devoted to the elucidation of this subject. In the threefold light already suggested we purpose to have these tribes of Israel pass before us in review. Each tribal name is suggestive of the personal character and fortune of the son of Jacob who bears it, and of the history, character, and circumstances of the tribes descended from him. Reuben, first named by Jacob in his blessings, claims our attention first.

I.—REUBEN'S SYMBOL

In his blessings the patriarch introduces a symbol to represent each of his sons and his tribe. It is rather an Egyptian method of conveying thoughts by hieroglyphics. Pictures to the eye these are that represent the patriarch's thought—family portraits true to life, a coat-of-arms emblazoned on the escutcheon of the tribe. What is Reuben's symbol or coat-of-arms? "Unstable as water." Water is his symbol. But in what form? There is the

majesty of the sea, the serenity of the great river, the beauty of the crystal fountain, the impetuosity of the mountain cascade, the softness of the April shower, the gentle beauty of the dew. Which is it? How shall Reuben embody the thought, clothe it with form, and engrave it on his standard? Looking into the meaning of the Hebrew word here used, we find the phrase "Unstable as water" signifies "boiling up like water in a vessel," or, yet more exactly, "boiling over." A vessel of water over the wood fire of the pilgrim's camp, a fire quickly kindled; while the fuel is supplied, the vessel sputters and steams and boils over. When the embers die out the bluster is gone, and apathy ensues. The meaning of the symbol as given by the patriarch is "Thou shalt not excel." The boiling of the water depends on the fuel and the fire and the feeder of both. It has no power of its own. Reuben is pronounced incapable of excellence because he has not inherently its elements in his soul. Now let us see how the history of Reuben and his tribe corresponds with this.

II.—REUBEN THE MAN

There is that about Jacob's language that suggests a prospect for this son originally bright and glorious. Hear his words: "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, the beginning of my strength,

the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power." The blessing which he seems to have inherited and somewhat possessed was excellence. He excelled. It was his right, and in some degree at first his portion. The word "excellence" and the thought otherwise expressed—how these ring through the blessing which Jacob speaks! What was Reuben's excellence?

First.—There is to Reuben the excellence of primogeniture. He is the firstborn of many brethren. At birth he is called Reuben: "Behold a son!" The name by its meaning tells of the joy with which his birthright is recognized. The birthright embraced three blessings—property, power, priesthood. The largest portion of patriarchal wealth descended to the eldest son. The right of authority and rule belonged to the eldest son. The sacred function of priestly office descended in the line of the firstborn. All these peculiar privileges belong to Reuben.

Second.—Other excellences also pertained to him. Several incidents in Reuben's life put him in a very favorable light.

Reuben interposed by stratagem to save Joseph's life. His plan was but partially successful, yet sufficiently so to rescue Jacob's favorite son from a dreadful and bloody death. Jacob's home was at Hebron, where the patriarch tarried, while most of his sons were grazing their numerous flocks on the

fertile hills of Shechem and amid its lovely vales. Joseph acted as the messenger boy to convey tidings from the father to his sons, and back again. Such a mission he now performs. Alone he sets out from his home, climbs the mountains, fords the streams, crosses the gorges, treads the valleys, and hies on his way. He wears the beautiful coat of many colors which his father in his peculiar fancy gave. The distance is great, the country wild, but with brave heart he traverses it, obedient to his father's word. Conquering the distance and the dangers, he comes in sight of his brethren, soon, as he may well hope, to be greeted by them as a welcomed messenger from home. But the only salutation he receives is in the voice of envy and with bitter words. "Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit. Then we shall see what will become of his dreams."

These were not Reuben's words. But he heard them. They sank like lead down into his heart. He said: "Let us not kill him. Shed no blood. Cast him into this pit in the wilderness, and lay no hand on him." This he said in order that he might deliver him out of their hands and return him to his father. He preferred to give him his liberty at once. Why should he wish to see a brother placed in bonds? But this he was unable to effect. As a compromise and a piece of strategy he proposed to

put Joseph in the pit, designing himself to come secretly and take him out. Unsuspicious of his design, they consent. They lower Joseph into the pit, Reuben helping, but with heart rending. How little did Joseph know the loving purpose of his eldest brother!

The company of brethren now breaks up. All sit down to eat bread, unmindful of Joseph's tears, except Reuben only. Reuben moves off, perhaps to weep, doubtless to get aloof from all the rest. He has a purpose in wishing to be alone. While he is absent a company of Midianitish merchantmen come along on their way to Egypt. The heartless brethren quickly drive a trade with them, and sell the weeping lad for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph goes a slave to Egypt. After a while, as soon as a convenient opportunity occurs, Reuben hastens to the pit to lift Joseph out and send him home. To his amazement, chagrin, and sorrow the lad is gone. He rends his clothes, and, finding the others, says: "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" That was a kind and loving heart, a tender spirit, and a sensitive conscience.

Surely thus far we do not find Reuben altogether bad. There is in him here a noteworthy trace of true nobility. Our hearts are more drawn to him than to the others who planned a brother's death; then, thwarted in that, sold him a slave to strangers destined to a distant land.

There is another incident in Reuben's life that presents him in a favorable light—his responsibility for Benjamin. It is remarkable that his prominence is in connection with Jacob's favorite two sons. We have noticed his partially successful interposition on behalf of Joseph. We now notice his memorable connection with Benjamin. Long and weary years have passed since Joseph's coat, dripping with blood, was brought to Hebron and the falsehood stated, "A wild beast hath devoured him." Jacob has grown visibly older through all these years. More than years have bowed him and carved on his features the lineaments of care. Trouble has oppressed his heart. Joseph is not. Aye, and other troubles come. Troubles come thick about him. Rachel is dead. Joseph is not. The brightest lights of the patriarch's home have gone out. Peace is somewhat wanting in the home. Now famine comes with its oppression on the land.

Plenty still reigns in Egypt, so the rumor goes. Ten brothers harness up their beasts of burden, and go down to Egypt to purchase corn. It is expressly stated that Benjamin did not go. Twenty-three years have passed since the parting at the pit. Now the ten brothers stand before Joseph. He knows them. They know him not. To try them, Joseph says: "Ye are spies." They answer: "We are true men. Thy servants are no spies. Thy servants are twelve brethren, sons of one man. The youngest

is this day with our father at home ; and one is not." Unfortunate speech. "Twelve of you? One at home? The youngest there? Now I shall test your truthfulness. Go, bring him here. I shall keep one of you as a pledge. Let the others go back and carry corn to their father, and come again bringing the youngest with them." Hear now the voice of conscience speaking aloud : "We are guilty concerning our brother." Sins come back home. Arrows shot upward fall down again. Simeon is bound in prison. Nine troubled men turn their faces homeward. On their way back they find their money replaced in their sacks of corn. This troubled them the more. Their old sin is tracking them hard.

They tell their story to Jacob. "Now," say they, "let us have Benjamin." "No," says Jacob; "Joseph is not; Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away." No wonder the patriarch says, "My son shall not go down with you." Of what value to him is corn purchased at the price of sons? Of what value is life itself at such a cost? Now is Reuben's time again. To the front steps again the eldest son. "Father," says he, "let Benjamin go. Simeon is waiting and wasting in a prison cell. He will not be released till Benjamin appears." Jacob: "Why dealt ye so with me as to tell him that I had yet another son?" "He inquired strictly of us. I will be surety for Benjamin. Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee. Deliver him to my hand,

and I will bring him to thee again." It was promising a great deal, more than Reuben might be able to fulfill. It was absurd to think of slaying Reuben's sons if the father should fail to bring Benjamin again. But the language shows Reuben's character in its true light. The traits thus far developed, to say the least, are not unfavorable. They give promise of a bright, useful, honorable life. But the one great sin which mars Reuben's life and overclouds his career, converts his father's blessing into a curse, and taints his posterity, robs him of all excellence and dooms his shadowed race.

III.—THE REUBENITES

"Thou shalt not excel." Reuben loses by his sin the three excellences of his birthright—property, power, priesthood. The excellency of *property* goes to Joseph. Joseph, through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, gets a double portion in the inheritance of the land of Canaan. Reuben does not even go within the original boundaries of the promised land. What he came to possess he early lost, being among the earliest carried captive to a foreign land. Reuben settled east of the Jordan. The excellency of *power* passes over to Judah. "Judah prevailed over his brethren, and from him came the chief ruler." The excellency of *priesthood* goes to Levi, whose tribe at Sinai's base was chosen to perform

the priestly function in the Lord's house and among his brethren. Reuben seems to have lost all the authority over his brethren which his birthright entitled him to exercise: "When he spake to them, they would not hear." Like a withering blast on the fairest prospect falls the patriarch's sentence on his eldest son: "Thou shalt not excel."

Long indeed is the list of heroes of which Israel may boast—men of brave hearts, strong arms; men of mighty valor; heroes who have written their names high in the records of fame. Search through them all, scrutinize their records, inquire of all the faithful chroniclers,—among them all not one valiant hero hails from Reuben's tribe. Famous judges by their rulings in Israel shed a luster on the age in which they lived and on the people among whom they served—men of worth, wisdom, prudence, men of whom any nation may be proud. Complete the list, write it fully, omit no name that deserves a place among them. Now scan the roll of excellence. Not one of all the stern, irreproachable, incorruptible ministers of justice belongs to Reuben's tribe. Now take the roll of prophets, long catalogue of those wonderful men with whom God deigned to converse, to whom God disclosed the scenes of coming days, God's representatives on earth. They are the men who more than any others shed a luster on Israel's history. Men are they, called from every class, in every sphere, to

teach the truth of heaven. Enroll them from Moses to Malachi. Write their names in letters of gold. Now look upon the shining page. Read each name. Which of them all a Reubenite is called? Not one! Ask not if Reuben's tribe produced a king. The right of royalty Reuben forfeited. Kings come by family descent. Yet sometimes men by native force usurp the royal honors and make good their claim by might. No Reubenite ever sat upon a throne by native right or force of excellence. No city rose to fame in Reuben's land. "Thou shalt not excel."

Once the patriarchal sentence has gone forth, seldom does Reuben's name appear in Israel's history. When it does appear, the record is but the faithful servant to confirm the prophetic declaration of the discerning father: "Like a vessel of boiling water, thou shalt not excel."

The only historic attempt the tribe of Reuben ever made to create a sensation and arrest the doom of mediocrity, was a miserable failure, as it deserved to be. In the terrible dead level of mediocrity to which this tribe sank, two names achieve a momentary notoriety; but the boiling water soon subsides. Dathan and Abiram are the men. They stand up before Moses and Aaron and say: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye yourselves above the

congregation of the Lord?" Moses: "If the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord." And the ground opened and swallowed them up.

The tocsin of war is sounded. A dire necessity presses the Israelites in the north. Even a woman is found to buckle warlike armor on and to thrust herself into the place of danger. The standard is borne aloft. The banner is unfurled. The trumpet calls to deeds of heroic daring. A noble little army is marshaled under Deborah and Barak. But Reuben, unmartial, unmoved by patriotic zeal, is content to discuss the latest news that comes from the stirring scenes of Kishon's blood-stained fields. Neither wails of distress, nor fraternal appeals, nor martial commands, nor trumpet's music, can arouse Reuben's spirit or stir his soul. He lingers among his sheepfolds, prefers the music of the shepherd's pipe and the bleating of the sheep to the clangor of arms and the turmoil of war.

An easy, mediocre life he lives. As its fruit soon his individuality fades on the page of Israel's history. His cities are known, if at all, by Moabite names. He failed to stamp his own individuality on them. In spite of the witness altar Ed, which with Gad and Manasseh, transjordanic tribes, Reuben reared on the banks of Jordan, he drifted. Remote from the central seat of national government,

taking little interest in civil or sacred affairs, having no heroes, prophets, or judges to link the tribe to national glories, inheriting their ancestor's weakness, bearing his character and shadowed by his curse, the Reubenites were the first to drift from the ancient moorings and relinquish the religion of their fathers. They went after the gods of the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before them. Instead of scattering the darkness with the light, their light was dimmed, then extinguished, by the dreadful night of idolatry which prevailed about them. The last historic mention of them: the Reubenites were carried off by Pul and Tiglath-Pileser and placed in the remote regions of Mesopotamia. The curtain falls. Reuben, who began so well, yet fell so low, without a lingering halo of excellence to crown his name disappears from the historic page.

The right to covenant blessings may be lost. A single sin may mar the fairest prospect and blight the happiest life. Sin leaves a scar which the rolling ages cannot remove. There is no excellence that endures without God's blessing. God by His grace may blot out sin and remove the curse which, self-imposed, oppresses the sinful heart.

III

SIMEON

“ Simeon and Levi are brethren;
Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.
O my soul, come not thou into their secret;
Unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their selfwill they digged down a wall.
Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce;
And their wrath, for it was cruel:
I will divide them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.”

—GEN. 49: 5-7.

SIMEON and Levi are here joined. A close partnership is theirs. They are united by more than a single bond. In the picture they stand together at their father's side. In the review of sons at the same moment they appear. By the patriarch's parting words they are linked. The same announcement is made concerning both. They are full brothers, sons of Jacob and Leah. These are bonds. But when Jacob says, “ Simeon and Levi are brethren,” he doubtless means more than this. He is pointing to another, different, closer bond; they are alike. The second and third sons of Jacob early in

life by a congeniality of spirit, taste, and pursuit are linked together in closest partnership. It was not Jacob who, in his parting counsel, linked them, but their own temperaments. It is the principle of segregation operating here. Like sees like. Hence, Simeon and Levi are brethren.

The same patriarchal words are pronounced on both. Their fulfillment, in both cases most exact, is so different as regards them that we shall consider them singly and trace apart these two diverse streams that from the same fountain flow. Simeon is the older, and is mentioned first. He shall also have with us the precedence.

I.—SIMEON'S SYMBOLIC SWORD

The symbol which represents Simeon, the picture around which Jacob's words gather and in which this second son is graphically set forth, is found in the expression: "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations." The marginal reading of the accepted version puts it somewhat more clearly: "Their swords are weapons of violence." Here catch we a sword gleam that is suggestive. As the eye traces the patriarch's words there comes on it the flash of a brandished sword. So we have learned Simeon's symbol by a glance. That symbol is a sword, an instrument of cruelty and violence. Well-chosen is this instrument to represent the man by

whose hand was held and wielded the first sword of which history tells and in whose hand this earliest historic sword was stained with human blood. Simeon's sword was the first to carve its cruel, bloody way to fame. By the record which it made we come to know that Simeon was a murderer. The human blood which imbued his hands is seen dripping from the eager blade he grasped; and the blood-stained sword, with faithful emphasis of truth, becomes the symbol of Simeon and of his tribe.

Its meaning? What does the sword signify? Cruelty and violence. In what way? By division. The sword cleaves in twain. Shining and sharp, it cuts, separates, divides. The Great Teacher has declared: "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Men write their sentences with the instruments they use. Hence the patriarch, in the glimmering light of coming days, through the rifts his soul's dark cottage falling makes, proclaims as one who sees afar: "I will divide them in Jacob: I will scatter them in Israel." Simeon has resorted to the sword. He has made his fellow-men to feel its keen, cold edge. Let it be his prophetic symbol. Under it he shall fall; before it be driven; by it be divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel.

Whenever we think of Simeon, let us think of him as thus pictured—wearing a sharp, flashing,

fine-pointed, keen-edged sword. Let us remember that as it points back faithfully to historic truth, so with unerring aim and unfaltering exactness it points onward to the truth of coming days.

II.—SIMEON'S HISTORICAL SWORD

There are very few artistic strokes in the personal picture of this man. What of that? By these few he is clearly set forth to our view. We truly see him as he is. Up to this death scene and tribal blessing few incidents of Simeon's life are given. But these few have much to tell. Few and brief are the words. Through them his character escapes, and we behold it as, like a sword flash, it flits by. Simeon is implacable, cruel, revengeful, reckless. Reuben and he, though full brothers too, were not brethren in that other sense. They had nothing in common; they were not in sympathy. Reuben was good-natured, kind-hearted, easy-going. He was something like his grandfather Isaac, gentle and kind and weak. Simeon was more like his uncle Esau, though somewhat wanting in the noble traits which are not difficult to trace in Esau's wild career. Simeon was, as his father said, who knew him best and had a most discriminating mind, very much like a sword.

His name Simeon, "Jehovah hath heard," suggests that as a babe he was welcomed as a direct an-

swer to prayer. If so, we here learn, what is so often learned, that we bring judgments on ourselves; that our prayers are not always wisest; that we do not always know what is for us best. The bright hopes that often cluster around a lovely infant's life come not always to fruition. As we look back through life, through its shadows and sorrows, there is sometimes more comfort in an infant's grave than in the wreck and ruin of many years of squandered life. Simeon lived. If to Leah he was God's voice, surely it was the divine voice in thunder tones.

The *first* scene in Simeon's life recorded for us is not a quiet, pastoral picture by any means. Simeon and Levi at Shechem play together a dreadful part. They two with drawn swords slay the men of Shechem. It is a strategic scheme, in which these two sons of Jacob are guilty of a double crime—falsehood and murder. They make promises which they do not keep, which we may fairly judge they do not intend to keep. They take lives which in a sense have been committed to their trust. They are not honorable men. In reference to this slaughter, which, it seems, they planned and executed secretly, Jacob exclaims: "O my soul, come not thou into their secret."

The *second* scene is at the pit of Joseph. Jewish tradition is not to be discarded, though it must be used with care. It may sometimes shed a light on

Bible story and help us somewhat to understand the inspired word. The Targum states that Simeon and Levi were especially enemies of Joseph. This is most probable. Joseph's dream intimated that he was to be exalted above his brethren. Who would resent that most? Reuben, the eldest son, with whom Joseph's exaltation would most interfere, was too good-natured and kind-hearted to be resentful of this indignity done to the eldest son. Simeon came next, and Levi next to him. They were grasping, cruel men. It is just what might be expected then of them, and especially of Simeon, to feel offended, take the slight, and cherish resentment in the heart.

Joseph comes over the hills to Shechem, then to Dothan, a messenger to his brethren from their home at Hebron. What do these shepherd brethren say? "Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, let us slay him, and cast him into some pit in this wilderness. Then we shall see what will become of his dreams." Here are resentment and cruelty. It is just a Shechem affair over again. It fits into the character of Simeon exactly. It is the undeviating testimony of Jewish tradition that Simeon's voice counseled death, Simeon's hands stripped from Joseph the beautiful coat Jacob had given his favorite son, Simeon's strength bound the helpless lad; Simeon mainly, though assisted by the others, lowered the pleading brother into the pit's dark depth.

Unfeeling, cruel as a sword, he dealt fiercely with a prince of Israel.

The *third* scene is far away from the ancestral home and Canaan's fertile hills and lovely meadows where Jacob's flocks are grazed. It is in Egypt. It is one of those times in history when scenes long remembered recur, but in their recurrence are reversed. Justice holds aloft the scales to bring them to an even balance. The place is changed. The persons are the same. They change their parts in the picture. So by reversal men come to take of truth a broader view, to see life in a clearer light. All of the pit scene are together now. It is a throne scene now. He who was lowest is highest now. Joseph puts Simeon in the shadow of a prison cell. "Bring Benjamin," he says. "I will keep nine, and let one go to bring Benjamin back to me." There had been only one who had lifted up his voice to save Joseph's life. That one was Reuben. Joseph had heard him plead. In his heart he thanked him for it. Reuben's words had saved his life. We may readily believe that Joseph's plan was now to keep the others, and send Reuben back with the corn, and have him bring Benjamin to Egypt. Reuben's would be the safer hands for the sacred trust of a brother's life. For some reason his plan is slightly changed. He will send nine, and keep one as a pledge of their return. To choose that one, he glances around on them. Is it an accident? Is it

by merest chance? See, he rests on Simeon his eye, and says, Bind him: put him in the shadow of the prison cell. Before his brothers' eyes Simeon is bound and cast into the Egyptian jail. The scene is thus reversed. By this reversal, through many weary years, conscience cries, "We are surely guilty concerning our brother." It is a fearful moment when the finger of Providence points out a long-hidden crime and the criminal. Guilt clings to a man. Justice pursues a man, wearies not, but overtakes and measures out to the full that judgment which is due. In Jewish tradition the strength of Simeon is second to that of Samson. In all the legends connected with his name his fierceness and implacability are prominently mentioned. When he dies, the story goes, with his parting breath he warns his children against the indulgence of such passions.

The sword points back very sharply and truly to Simeon's historical record. He who had known him longest, had seen him oftenest, had watched him most closely and anxiously, sums up his judgment concerning his second son—a cruel and relentless sword.

III.—SIMEON'S PROPHETICAL SWORD

Simeon's sword is prophetic as well as symbolic and historical. The future is the fruitage of the past. This sword pierces and rends somewhat the

veil that shuts out the future of Simeon and his tribe. "I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel."

From the character given to Simeon in the Bible and tradition he might be thought eminently well qualified to take care of himself. If his tribe partakes of his physical and mental peculiarities, surely they may afford to be self-reliant. So it might seem. He is strong, and capable of self-defense. He is selfish, and capable of looking after his own interest. He is cruel, and capable of trampling down all who oppose him. Not weakness nor magnanimity, nor conscientiousness, is in his way. Does he not seem one who can carve out his own fortune in those wild, rough, unsettled times? Give him his sword. He asks no more. He girds on his sword. That sword carves out the ruin of the man and tribe. By it division came.

This is seen in Moses' census. "I will divide them." They were fearfully divided, as the authentic figures show. The census of Israel was taken twice by Moses. Once at Sinai, in the shadow of the awful mount, soon after the exodus; again, on the green hills of Moab, in full view of the promised land, just before the memorable passage of the Jordan. It is a noteworthy fact that the pilgrim host, for forty years homeless wanderers in dreary wastes or pathless wilds, surrounded by enemies, bitten by serpents, infected by plagues, worn by marches, dis-

couraged by the difficulties of the way, not merely escapes utter extermination, but actually maintains its numbers and by its growth constantly supplies the places which death was making vacant in its ranks. It is a wonder of history. It enters the wilderness 600,000 strong in men of war. Forty years later it emerges 600,000 strong. The history of the individual tribes is yet more remarkable. Seven of them gain in numbers. Of these Manasseh is most remarkable. This tribe advanced from 32,000 to 52,000, a gain of 20,000 in forty years. Five tribes suffered diminution. Of these the most remarkable is Simeon's. They entered 59,000 strong, and emerged 22,000 strong, a loss of 37,000 men. Simeon's tribe was fearfully divided. There is no other tribe whose loss is comparable to this. The next greatest loss is 8,000 men. Simeon's is a loss of 37,000. More than the half was gone.

Why is this? The reason is not difficult to find. It was brought about by the sword. The taker of the sword is by it perishing. The incident is given. The host of Israel is camping on the high tableland of Moab, the heights that overlook the lower Jordan and the plains of Jericho. They are now on the borders of the promised land. The cloud which had long guided the pilgrims has now rested, and preparations are soon to be perfected for the passage of the Jordan. Surely it is a time for

joyful worship of Jehovah, the living God. Surely now, if ever, a people will be faithful to their allegiance. One more march, a short one, will bring them home.

The Moabites make a feast and invite Israel to it. Many Israelites go, and bow down to idol gods. These Israelites join themselves to Baal-Peor. The anger of God is kindled against them. By His command through Moses the order is given: "Slay ye every one his men that were joined to Baal-Peor." One name emerges here of those who engaged in this idolatry, only one. It is Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites. This sad disaster makes fearful inroad into their tribe. The sword of punishment is busy in its fearful work. The slaughter ceases. The numbers are taken. Lo! Simeon has been fearfully divided. At Sinai Simeon's tribe is third in rank of numbers. At Jordan it is last, and a long way least.

David's census witnesses the same. The portion of the land which Judah received being too large for even that great tribe, and Simeon's tribe being now so small, Simeon receives as an inheritance eighteen cities in Judah. This was in the southernmost part of Canaan, bordering on the desert and on the Mediterranean Sea. Simeon's cities were around that memorable spot, the venerable well of Beer-sheba. Here they dwelt and dwindled. The

census seems always to have a sad tale to tell for Simeon. David resolves to number his people. The work is entrusted to Joab. Joab sends out his agents over all the kingdom. They perform their work. Now the reports come in, and the great reckoning is made. Shall we consult the census rolls for Simeon's name? Here it is. Read! In the midst of the names and numbers we find a singular record, an interpolation, a little note. It seems to be apologetic. It seems to be needed to justify the census-taker, lest his figures be judged as incorrect. It is an explanation for the poor showing Simeon makes. Surely these small figures must be wrong. There are more Simeonites than this. No! "They had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah." Why not? The census-taker maybe did not know. Jacob long ago had said: "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." The division was still going on.

Israel's annals tell the same story. Their dispersion in Israel confirms the ancient word. Selfish, violent people are seldom satisfied. They never dwell contented. So it is with Simeon. They journeyed forty years to get to Canaan. When they reached it and were assigned their homes, they were not content. They wore the sword, and could not consent to dwell in peace. We have accounts of two efforts they made to procure homes elsewhere.

Each effort resulted, not in the strength of unity, but in the weakness of division.

Thirteen chieftains form a colony. Their names are all given in the Bible. They quit the cities they received from Judah and seek a better country at Gedor, at the entrance of Gedor, at the east side of the ravine. They had there excellent pasture for their flocks. The land is wide and open and quiet and peaceable. Its inhabitants, the Hamites, had dwelt there of old. The Hamites were a very quiet people. Their land had been handed down from father to son. But the thirteen chieftains of Simeon's tribe drew their swords, smote the Hamite tents and the inhabitants, destroyed them utterly and dwelt in their room. Divided again; part in Judah and part in Gedor.

Four chiefs collect a band of five hundred men and undertake an expedition against the remnant of Amalek, who had taken refuge in the distant fortress of Mount Seir. They were successful. They drew the sword, smote Amalek, and took possession of his place. Simeon was the migratory tribe. Their expeditions were successful in a narrow view. They smote, slew, possessed. But their successes tended to undermine their strength. Thus too the prophetic word came to be fulfilled. They were scattered in Israel; in Judah, in Gedor, and in Mount Seir.

So by degrees Simeon disappears. They were

scattered till the remnants disappear. At last their vestiges are all erased. Here comes to view a strange feature of Moses' review and blessings of the tribes. In his blessing, Simeon's name does not appear. The departing leader and law-giver has a word for all other tribes, but none for Simeon. Does he by prophetic insight suggest that from the brilliant constellation one star is fading, at some time to pass entirely away? So divided and scattered came they to be, that there was little in the record to remind one of what was once a mighty tribe. So divided and scattered, that to the historian it has been a perplexing question to which of the two Israelitish kingdoms Simeon belonged. It seems the tribe was scattered over both.

One distinguished name the tribe produced; only one. It was a distinction of the symbolical sword. Yet it is difficult to say whether it is the heroine of a tragical romance or a strong character in living scenes. The city of Bethulia, a colony of Simeonites, is closely besieged. Impregnable itself, it defies the besieging armies of Assyria. Holofernes, despairing of success by direct attack, invests the city, cuts off its supply of food and water, and sits down to try what time will do. The people of the city are reduced to want. They can hold out no longer. Now a woman's voice is heard. Judith speaks: "Open the gate to me, and let me out." She goes to Holofernes' tent. She tells him that

she will take him into the city, within its gates. She watches her opportunity. Alone with Holofernes, by a well-directed blow of Simeon's sword she severs his head from his body, puts it into a sack, and carries it in triumph to Bethulia. The panic-stricken Assyrians are put to flight. Bethulia is free. Judith, the sole heroine of Simeon's tribe, is extolled as the ideal type of piety, beauty, and courage wherever Jewish annals are read and Jewish literature is admired. Thus by the flash of a sword passes the record of this tribe away.

Reuben in his character and career represents precious birthright lost by fearful sin. Simeon shows the bitter fruit of unrestrained anger, undisciplined passions, and free indulgence of sinful propensities of nature. The best characters and the worst are made of the same material. The worst, when native endowments are unguided and uncontrolled. The best, when these gifts of God are subdued by grace, cultivated with care, and consecrated to the service of the Most High God.

IV

LEVI

“Simeon and Levi are brethern;
Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.
O my soul, come not thou into their secret;
Unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united:
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their selfwill they digged down a wall.
Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce;
And their wrath, for it was cruel:
I will divide them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.”

—GEN. 49: 5-7.

LEVI, the third son of Jacob and Leah, is joined to Simeon in the patriarch's prophetic words. The union of these two brothers is recognized in the father's parting counsel. It is convenient, however, to trace apart the application of these words to the characters and destinies of the men and their tribes. We shall find their characters and destinies responsive to Jacob's announcement, though in different ways.

I.—LEVI'S SYMBOL

Levi's symbol is the same as Simeon's, a sword; weapons of violence are their swords. In the pic-

ture set before us Levi wears a sword, gleaming and sharp, drawn and ready for its cruel work. This is the scene which Jacob portrays.

It may be observed that Levi is the only one of all these sons to whom an independent and separate symbol is not given. This is true unless we except Simeon as well. But Levi is attached to Simeon; the same words and the same symbol he receives. Levi is the dependent one. Levi is the adjunct. Somewhat a subordinate position is given him. Singular fact, and inviting our notice here, is the meaning of Levi's name, "Joined." Leah felt not assured of Jacob's earnest affection. When, therefore, this third son was born, she hoped he would prove a bond of her husband's love. Hence she called the babe Levi, Joined.

There was a larger meaning in the word than she knew. The name follows the boy. Its significance adheres to him and marks out his fortune. When he appears in incident of patriarchal life or domestic scene, it is not independently, but "joined" to Simeon. "Simeon and Levi" is the phrase as crystallized by the life and record of the men. This union of the two is noticed not only in the slaughter of the Shechemites, but at the bedside of the old father, when he gathers his sons for his parting words ere he dies. Simeon and Levi are brethren. They are joined, or, rather, the younger is joined to the older, Levi to Simeon. To them a joint

announcement is made; to them a joint symbol is given. The symbol which both receive and wear is a cruel sword, an instrument of violence.

As regards its meaning, this symbolical sword signifies division. In the case of Levi and his tribe we may trace three sorts of division that mark their career.

First.—There is a division from Simeon, to whom Levi had been joined. They had been united as brethren. They both take swords to execute their joint schemes. Those swords divide them and their destinies. The paternal parting words they jointly receive. These words in great exactness are fulfilled, yet in the two men in remarkably different ways. We have seen how the cruel, relentless Simeon, with the sword dividing others, was himself by the sword so terribly divided. Now we shall see how truly, yet differently, the other sword-bearer was divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel. This difference of destiny is intimated in the patriarch's words. We are not concerned to know how much of the fulfillment of his own words Jacob foresaw. We are concerned to note how far historic events coincide with the patriarch's words. It may be that a prophet appreciates not the full import of his own prophecies. His words may be more richly freighted with the truth of coming days than he supposes. He girds Levi with a sword. All that his act imports he may not know. We through the

light of history look back and discern, it may be, even more than he, what the sword implies. Providence is the divine commentary on the divine word. I will divide them in Jacob; divide Levi from Simeon. Never, perhaps, in the range of history have any other two people, at one time so thoroughly united, become so effectually divided and separated from each other, in character and destiny, as Simeon and Levi. They are divided and separated by the sword. This is one significance of Jacob's words.

Second.—There is a division in Levi's tribe. It is a thorough, complete, and beautiful division of the people that constitute the tribe of Levi. Through their tribal ranks many lines are drawn, that mark out and classify the Levite tribe.

Third.—There is a division of the tribe among the other tribes, a scattering of Levi among the people of Israel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

II.—LEVI'S DIVISION FROM SIMEON

In the career of this tribe there was a moment, sharp as the sword point, on which its destiny hung. There was a crisis, thrilled with the trembling balance of future good or ill. The faithful chronicler records the time and names the place in which these two tribes together stand, at which they for-

ever part. The line of separation is keen and sharp. It is deeply written, ineffaceably inscribed. This is the moment when Simeon and Levi cease to be brethren; when Levi, no longer joined to his elder brother, but standing apart from him, is joined to God.

We see them stand side by side. The Levite wipes the blood of Shechem from his sword and draws it in a nobler cause, and redeems his character. The Simeonite sheathes his gory blade, uncleansed of murderous stain, and refuses to wield his sword for God. The prophetic word that moment is fulfilled. Division came where long the blood had held. These brethren parted—the one to dwindle and finally, ingloriously, disappear; the other to rise, to achieve a bright destiny, to shed a bright luster on the nation, to fill pages of history with records of heroic deeds and honored names. The one confirmed his sentence by his life; the other by a better life transformed evil into good and lifted and rolled away the shadow which had fallen on the tribe. See how this was done.

It is at the base of Sinai's shadowing height. The host of Israel is camping here. Moses, called of God, has climbed the Mount. He has passed from view among the rugged heights. He is learning lessons from the great Teacher and Ruler of the host below. Moses away, Israel becomes idolatrous. Recently emancipated from Egyptian bonds,

they are ignorant and weak; men in age, children in character. They see Moses vanish from their sight beyond the perilous crags and jutting rocks and dizzy heights; they watch him till he passes out of sight. Now they wait for him. They wait long and earnestly and anxiously. What has become of this Moses who brought them out of Egypt, they do not know. They ask, but none can answer. Days go by. Weeks wear away. A solid month passes. No tidings come from their absent leader. He is surely lost. The fortieth day of his absence finds them bowing to a golden calf. The same day reveals Moses descending from the mountain height. Two tables of the law are in his hands. When the disgraceful scene of idolatry bursts on his sight, incensed at their unfaithfulness, he dashes the tables from his hands and breaks them in pieces at the mountain base. He grinds the golden calf to dust and scatters the gold dust in the streams of which Israel drank. The mighty man, inflamed with indignant anger, his spirit stirred with a holy zeal, in the grandeur of true greatness, abhorrent of Israel's crime, just from the presence of the King, cries aloud: "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me."

Now mark the event. "And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." Put every man his *sword* by his side. How appropriate the command to Levi's son, whose tribal symbol

was a sword. Put every man his sword by his side, go through the camp and slay. Three thousand men of Israel fell that day on Levi's sword. Where is Simeon now? He does not appear. His sword is sheathed. He can plot in darkness, he can fall upon helpless Shechemites; but when God calls for the sword his is not drawn. Most likely the men of Levi bowed to the golden calf as did the others. Aaron superintended the work, and he was a Levite. Their virtue is not an exemption from the crime, but a prompt repentance, return, response, when Moses called.

On that memorable day was conferred on Levi's tribe one of Reuben's three birthright blessings. Reuben lost all his birthright: his double portion of patriarchal wealth, his superior patriarchal rule, and his sacerdotal authority and power. This last, the sacerdotal office, Levi received, because at Sinai he redeemed his character by heroic devotion to his God. Moses said: "Consecrate yourselves this day to the Lord, because every man of you hath been against his brother this day." It was a hard, self-denying work to which these Levites were called, viewed in the light of natural affection—to slay those of kindred ties and tenderest relations and strongest bonds. But it was God's cause; it was His command. So the Levites consecrate themselves and their swords to God. They are faithful, devout, and ready. Such are the men whom

God chooses and appoints to serve Him. Such are the men whom He promotes.

The consecration of a tribe is a new feature of Israel's host and history which demands our notice. A tribe is set apart to sacerdotal duties. Heretofore the eldest son in each family is set apart for God. You remember how this occurred. It was a terrible night in Egypt. There was weeping in every Egyptian home from Pharaoh's royal palace to the lowliest hut in all the realm. With Israel there was joy in every home, humble as were the dwellings of the slaves. Why this difference? Every Egyptian parent mourns over the death of his firstborn child. The tenth, the last, the greatest plague hangs like a pall over all the land. There is universal grief, inconsolable sorrow everywhere. With what joy the Israelitish mother clasps her firstborn, living, to her heart, and thanks God for the precious life preserved! God spared that life. In a peculiar sense that life belongs to God. Therefore every firstborn shall be mine, says God.

Now at Sinai God makes a change. He substitutes Levi's heroic tribe for Israel's firstborn. The tribe shall be his for sacred office, instead of the firstborn of every home. Now notice the coincidence of numbers. Levi's at Sinai is the smallest tribe of all the host—22,000 men. Even little Benjamin is nearly double that. No wonder that up to this time they joined their little force to Simeon's

mighty tribe of 59,000 men. Somehow the development of this tribe has been retarded. But the day of their distress has closed. Israel's firstborn numbered 22,273. This chosen tribe just about equals that. At the Jordan Simeon's mighty host has been cut down to 22,000 men; Levi's highly exalted in office, lifted also in rank of numbers. Thus Simeon and Levi were divided.

III.—LEVI'S DIVISION WITHIN THE TRIBE

As the religious tribe, the tribe of sacred office, Levi's was classified to a remarkable degree. It was more perfectly and beautifully divided than any other tribe. The arrangement of the tribe for the performance of its sacred function is a marvelous system that commends itself to our notice and earnest study. Division is the word that describes it all.

First.—There is a division of families. A three-fold division runs through the entire tribe, according to Levi's three sons—Gershon, Kohath and Merari. The second son outstrips the first and attains precedence, as Jacob supplanted Esau, Levi supplanted Reuben, Ephraim supplanted Manasseh. So the order of Levi's sons as always given is: Kohath, Gershon, Merari. Hence, their families, which together constitute Levi's tribe, are Kohathites, Gershonites, Merarites. One family of Kohath-

ites, the descendants of Aaron, were set apart as priests. All the rest were called Levites, who were in a general way servants of the Sanctuary. The Kohathites were the most honorable and holiest of the Levites. They camped on the south of the Tabernacle. On the march they carried the vessels of the Sanctuary, even the sacred Ark, after the priests had covered them with a dark blue cloth. The Gershonites camped on the west, and on the march carried the curtains and the hangings. The Merarites camped on the north, and on the march carried the heavier parts, the boards, the bars, the pillars of the sacred tents. The Gershonites and the Merarites were allowed wagons and oxen to transport these heavy burdens, but the Kohathites, because they were intrusted with the more sacred burdens, must carry them on their shoulders, unaided by any other helpers from without. The priests camped east of the Tabernacle. So Levi's tribe camped nearest to the Tabernacle, round about it on every side.

Second.— There is a division of duties. When the marching was all done, and Israel was settled in the land of Canaan, these Levitical families were assigned to duties most in accordance with their rank. The greatest drudgery devolved on Merari, next on Gershon, least on Kohath. The most laborious duties of Merari and Gershon were devolved on others in a peculiar way. Soon after

their entrance into Canaan there came to Joshua on a certain day men with molded bread, old sacks, clouted shoes, and a generally dilapidated look, as if they had come on a long journey and were very far from home. They made a league with Joshua. Joshua asked not counsel of God, but made peace with them, and sealed it with a vow. They were neighbors. For this deception they were made "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the Sanctuary. By these Gibeonites Gershon and Merari were partially relieved. Afterwards the Nethenim, captives taken in war, were assigned to this duty. Saul had wickedly slain the Gibeonites. For this act God sent a three years' famine on the land. Thus the Levites, whose duties were connected with the Tabernacle and the Temple, somewhat relieved, could be scattered in Israel.

Third.—There is a division of service. The tribe was divided into courses. These courses were so arranged that once every year each course would be on duty in Jerusalem. In this division the number twelve predominates. There were 24,000 Levites, 24 courses of priests, 288 (24x12) singers for the Temple choir. They would need, when their turn came, to be able to perform their parts in the great choral hymns of the Temple. For this they received a special training. Hence, the long intervals when off Temple duty were not spent in idleness nor in duties foreign to their

sacred office. The three Levite families are represented in the music of the Temple. The sweet strains of Heman's harps and psalteries, the well-trained voices of Asaph and his choristers, and the melodious notes of Ethan and Jeduthun, men of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari, meet and blend and harmonize, and make the Temple resound with strains of sacred music. While speaking of music, it may be well to mention that there were in charge of the Levites, and for the education of the Levites, at least five seminaries of learning—at Bethel, Naioth, Jericho, Gilgal, and Jerusalem. Whatever else the students at these schools may have been taught, music was an essential part of the curriculum. Their course in sacred science may not have been as comprehensive, thorough, and profound as in the schools of the prophets in this day, but in one respect at least they suffer not by comparison; the art of sacred music was taught with great diligence and success. The Levites were taught not only to expound the word, but to lead the praises of God's House.

IV.—LEVI'S DIVISION AMONG THE OTHER TRIBES

Levi was divided in destiny from Simeon; divided among themselves for service; again, divided among other tribes and scattered in Israel. Levi received no separate portion of the land. Look over the map which represents the settlement of

the tribes. One tribal name is missing. Levi's name is not there. Jacob said: "I will scatter them in Israel." God afterward said: "Thou shalt have no portion among thy brethren in the land of Canaan: I am thy portion." They were honored with the sacred priestly office, and that office had connection with the entire nation. Two necessities devolved on Levi faithfully to perform his sacred duties.

First.—He must be relieved of the cares of tilling the soil. He must be given up to the one great work to which he was called by the voice of God. To do that work well he must do that work only. A man cannot farm and preach, nor do merchandise and preach. The want of time and energy for both may be an argument, but is not the great argument against attempting both. It is rather in the nature of the case that one excludes the other. There is an incongruity which we may recognize and feel. Levi to be a faithful guardian of the Temple must have no portion of the land to till, to engross his thoughts and to increase his cares. He had none. God gave him none.

But he must be provided for. He can serve in the Sanctuary. He cannot live on Sanctuary air nor on Sanctuary incense odors. All the fruits of Israel's toil are divided on Levi's behalf. He receives a tenth. The tithe of treasures from the seas; the tithe of oriental merchandise, of fleecy flocks,

of lowing herds, of golden grain, of luscious fruits, of honey in the comb, from all the tribes, from the far north of Dan to Beersheba in the distant south, from the roll of the Great Sea's waves in the west to the desert sands that mark the eastern limits of the tribes, is brought to Levi's tribe as God's portion out of which His servants live.

Second.—As public servants the Levites must not be gathered into one locality. But they must be dispersed. The Temple was the great center of religious worship, it is true, but if the whole tribe of Levi dwelt at its gates and in sight of its walls they might fail duly to consider and to regard the interests of far-distant tribes. Men care most for what they see. If Levi were concentrated at Jerusalem they would neglect the remote tribes beyond Jordan or the distant north. Therefore we see the wisdom of the prophetic words: I will scatter them in Israel.

In their scattering there is a beautiful order too. Forty-eight cities are allotted to Levi, an average of four cities from each tribe. The tribes were not of equal numbers nor of equal importance man for man. In the distribution these differences were considered. The noble tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, Dan, Manasseh, are honored by the assignment to them of the most honored family of Kohath. The next important tribes, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, have the Gershonites. The re-

maining tribes, Zebulun, Reuben, Gad, have the Merarites. Of these forty-eight cities six were cities of refuge—three east of Jordan and three west. From these forty-eight cities year by year, according to their courses, these scattered Levites gathered at the city of Jerusalem to perform their part in the service of the Temple. Thus the cruel and relentless sword of Levi, once drawn in wrath and stained with the blood of its murdered victims, redeemed by its work for God at Sinai, became a symbol of a nobler truth and higher life—worn by God's ministers and in God's service and in God's Sanctuary, a symbol of the inspired word committed to Levi's trust; that word which we are told is the Sword of the Spirit.

This tribe, ennobled by its devotedness to God, has a history brightened by a multitude of heroic exploits and honored by a host of illustrious names.

There are crises in our lives. In the watershed of the Rocky Mountains there is a point at which the falling rain is turned by a breath of air eastward to the Gulf or westward to the Pacific Ocean. There are lines in life that may make Simeons or Levis of us all. Children that kneel at the same sacred altar, lisp the same prayer, sing the same song, heirs of the same blessings, part to reap ruin or to achieve a shining destiny and a glorious end. The way to true honor and renown is by consecration of the life to God.

V

JUDAH

“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise;
Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies;
Thy father’s children shall bow down before thee.

Judah is a lion’s whelp:

From the prey, my son, thou art gone up:

He stooped down, he couched as a lion,

And as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

Nor a law-giver from between his feet,

Until Shiloh come;

And unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Binding his foal unto the vine,

And his ass’s colt unto the choice vine;

He washed his garments in wine,

And his clothes in the blood of grapes:

His eyes shall be red with wine,

And his teeth white with milk.”

—GEN. 49: 8-12.

JUDAH is the fourth son of Jacob and Leah. He is, with perhaps the exception of Joseph, the best known and the most eminent of the patriarch’s sons. As is very well known, the symbol of Judah and his tribe is a lion. There is nothing surely which would better portray the character and destiny of the man and his tribe. But even the lion, in the bare mention of it, comes not up to the high stand-

ard which is set for Judah. Three views of lion life are crowded into this one symbol—the lion, the lioness, and the lion's whelp.

"*Judah is a lion's whelp*," in youthful vigor and sportiveness exulting over the prey, the young cub delighting in the freshness of its life and feeding upon its victim. "*He couched as a lion*"; or, as the word here means, as "an old lion"; not rampant and roaming, but quiet and satisfied, having devoured his food and now taking his rest, couching in his den. The full force of this is perceived in the fact that an old lion, when lying down after satisfying his hunger, will not attack any person. He is power in repose. "*And as an old lion*"; rather to be rendered "and as a lioness"; "as a lioness, who shall rouse her up?" The lioness surrounded by her young none may provoke but at his peril. No creature is more alert, none more fierce. Thus the lion in every phase of its life is the symbol of Judah and his tribe—youthful vigor, power in repose, fierce and resistless when aroused.

As far as history informs, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were at no special pains to emblazon their symbols where the world could see. In fact, they had reason to be ashamed of what was thereby suggested to them, incidents of their lives of which they were reminded. Their symbols pointed to their crimes. Judah's symbol is something to be proud of. It is indicative of glory, honor, power.

Hence, it is not surprising to find the record that in their journeys through the wilderness at the head of Judah's column was the standard of the lion, and under it the stirring words: "Rise up, Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered." It is not surprising to learn that on each of the six steps leading up to the great ivory throne of Solomon, Judah's wise king, were two lions, one on each side, carved by Hiram's famous workmen; and two lions, one on each side of the throne itself.

The Egyptian hieroglyphic for pre-eminence was a lion's head and shaggy mane. Among the beasts of the forest or the plain, the wilderness or desert, the lion is supreme. Judah among his brethren is exalted, unrivaled, supreme. Judah is the great man among his brethren. His tribe is the great tribe among the host of Israel. Let us trace this pre-eminence.

I.—PRE-EMINENCE OF CHARACTER: JUDAH'S
PERSONAL GREATNESS.

Jacob gives the symbol, and then comments upon it. He indicates the directions in which the symbol points. "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: Thy father's children shall bow down before thee." Here is a play upon a word. Judah means praise. Leah praised God when her fourth son was born, and called him Praise. Jacob says:

"Praise, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise."

It was Judah who supported Reuben in the noble effort to save Joseph's life. But for his support Reuben's plan would probably have failed. When Reuben's plea and Reuben's pledge failed to induce the aged Jacob to let Benjamin go with them to Egypt, Judah spoke, Jacob yielded, and Benjamin went. Judah was a man of speech, of power in speech, an orator. This gift may have contributed largely to his wonderful influence over his brethren. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, spoke. None hearkened to their words. Judah's words were always with power. They never fail to sway. Judah's speech at Joseph's court in Egypt is one of the finest specimens of simple but beautiful and powerful eloquence to be found in the English language or elsewhere. True eloquence is natural. It is not a result of elocutionary art. Judah was too good a shepherd to be schooled in any art. His eloquence was from the heart. It was a natural gift, a great endowment from the Giver of all noble gifts. He had gathered inspiration among the hills of Shechem, in the pasture grounds of Dothan, and amid Hebron's varied scenes of vine-clad hills and lovely vales. That was all the training he had received. It was enough.

Thus prepared, thus only, for defense, he stands at a foreign court accused of highest crime. He is

among strangers. He glances around. Not a familiar face greets him; not a friendly smile gives encouragement. Amid harsh rulers, before a frowning prince, Judah stands. Circumstantial evidence by a remarkable combination is very strong against these sons of Jacob. Read the words he spoke. Judge of their eloquence by their effect. They moved and melted Joseph's heart and broke up the fountain of his tears. Even now, after thousands of years have passed, few can read these words of Judah unmoved to tears.

In this pathetic scene Judah is the central and heroic figure before whom even Joseph, clad in princely elegance and wearing Pharaoh's ring, bows with breaking heart and flowing tears. "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise, Thy father's sons shall bow down before thee." How rare is genuine praise! Men seldom praise those before whom they are constrained to bow in token of superiority. A little superiority to others provokes jealousy, envy, criticism, dislike. The man who is somewhat excelled sees in his successful rival nothing but faults; and wonders that others see not as he does. It is only far-surpassing excellence that disarms of such unworthy weapons. It is only when a man has not only excelled, but so far excelled as to exclude all rivalry, all possible competition, that praise begins to be hearty, genuine, sincere. When Joseph dreamed of exaltation

above his brethren they despised him. It was but a dream. Nothing could more clearly evince the great excellence of Judah than Jacob's words: "Thy father's sons shall bow down before thee, and thy brethren shall praise thee." Nobody questions the lion's superiority. Nobody proposes to contest the right of Judah to absolute pre-eminence. He takes his place with universal consent and universal applause. Some men are born to rule. If they come not into the world with the honors of birthright, they will achieve eminence by their own superior talents, by their native force. Such was Judah.

II.—PRE-EMINENCE OF NUMBERS: THE LARGEST TRIBE

In the light of history Judah's tribe was of all Israel's tribes the most prosperous, if we judge of prosperity by numbers. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." While some think these words are spoken of Shiloh, many learned and judicious commentators refer them to Judah first and to Shiloh as a representative of Judah next. At Sinai, where the Israelites were numbered, Judah numbered 74,600 men, by far the largest of the tribes, though the founder of this mighty tribe was younger than Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, heads of other tribes. Levi numbered 22,000. Judah, though younger, 74,600. The explanation is found

in Jacob's words spoken so long before: "Unto Judah shall the gathering of the people be." After forty years of wilderness life, at the Jordan Judah numbers 76,500. Numerical strength deserts not the tribe to which prophetic words ascribed the gathering of the people. In the dry chronicles, in the lifeless, dreary figures which measure David's multitude of men, this little record by its deviation from dull routine attracts the reader's notice: "Multiply like unto the children of Judah."

If not weary of figures, notice another remarkable record of Judah's numerical growth. When the kingdom of Solomon was divided, Rehoboam his son, the king of Judah, musters 180,000 men. In eighteen years the army of Judah has grown to 400,000 men. In the next reign it is 580,000, just the total of the two preceding reigns. In the next reign it is 1,160,000 men, exactly double what it was in the preceding reign, and exactly equal to the aggregate of the armies of the three preceding reigns. Such a rapid increase is perhaps without a parallel in the history of national development. It was the tribe great in numbers: "Unto Judah shall the gathering of the people be."

III.—PRE-EMINENCE OF WEALTH: THE RICH TRIBE

The lion was first served, and well served. In everything Judah comes first. Are the Israelites

on the march? The tribe of Judah leads the van. Judah's standard with its lion and its watchword is the first to penetrate the pathless wild, to scale the rocky hills, or to enter the stillness of the desert waste. Is the host called to sacrifice? Judah's tribe first draws near the Altar and sheds the sacrificial blood. Do the people ask, Who shall go up against the Canaanites first to fight against them? The answer comes: "Judah shall go up first: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand." Is the land to be divided? Judah is served first, and largely served. The land was divided by lots cast solemnly before Jehovah. To Judah fell the lion's portion. Judah's portion reached from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. The line that marked its northern limit ran just south of what afterwards was Jerusalem, leaving that site barely without the territory given to this tribe. The southern border was the southern boundary of Israel's land. Long ago the portion had been well described by Jacob when he said: "Binding his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk."

A great profusion of the good things of this life is indicated here. Here is wine and milk without money and without price. Here are the gardens and granaries of the land. The cities and villages

which crowned almost every hill in Judah's rich inheritance were remarkable for the beauty and profusion of the gardens which surrounded them; the scarlet blossoms of the pomegranate, the oranges which gilded the green foliage of their groves, adding to the beauty of the scene. Immense plains of corn-fields throughout Shephelah stretch to the seashore. From these corn-fields were gathered cargoes of grain shipped by Solomon to Phenicia in exchange for the products of Hiram's forests and for Hiram's art. There too were the olive trees, the sycamore trees, the treasures of oil, the care of which taxed the energies of men in David's day. There within the borders of this tribe that by lot fell to Judah lay in all its beauty the historic, famous, rich valley of Eshcol, from whose gigantic and luxuriant growth was plucked the noted cluster of grapes, a specimen of the abundant fruitage of the land, carried by the spies to Israel camping on the southern border of the land, fearing to enter in. Surely amid such luxuriant growth and rich abundance Judah might well afford to bind his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine. There surely was no difficulty in washing his garments in wine, his clothes in the blood of grapes.

Judah rolled in wealth. Judah's riches seemed always a tempting prize for the spoiler's hand. Kingdoms were enriched by the spoliation of Judah's wealth. Egypt, Damascus, Samaria, Nin-

evah, Babylon, each in turn emptied this rich treasury. But emptied it would not stay. Bankrupt Judah was often made; but ever quickly would rise from ruin, and in opulence surpass those who had grown rich on Judah's plundered treasures. The lion's strength was not exhausted nor his spirit quelled. In prosperity Judah is power in repose—calm, confident, dignified. In adversity, rising in his strength unconquered, he reasserts and reattains superiority and command.

IV.—PRE-EMINENCE OF POWER: THE ROYAL TRIBE

The lion is the emblem of royalty. The lion means crown, scepter, throne. How improbable the fulfillment in this sense of these patriarchal words. Judah in Egypt, in the land of Goshen, at his dying father's couch, looks not much like a king. Israel in Egypt looks not much like a people out of whom any royalty can come. A little band has gathered to see the patriarch die. Objects of charity almost, they receive benefaction from Pharaoh's hands. Their only tenure of Pharaoh's kindness is Joseph's life. Their prospects not enlarging, but contracting. They are destined soon to tread the deep, dark vale of poverty and bonds. Yet the dying man speaks of a crown, a scepter, a throne! Some might think it a delirious dream

of a dying man. The shadows fall. Servitude comes. Deeper, darker, drearier, the night shade falls on Israel. The prophecy remembered is long unfulfilled.

Seven hundred years have slowly passed away. The terrible battle of Gilboa has been fought. Israel is put to flight before Philistine hosts. The star of Saul has set—with the ebbing of his life. David, son of Jesse, of Judah's tribe, is hailed as King of Israel. Upon his brow the crown is placed. He mounts the throne. To his hand the scepter is given. This badge of royalty Judah holds a thousand years.

The northern kingdom was the scene of almost constant revolution and usurpations. Various dynasties sat on that throne. Seldom there did son succeed his father. Often the servant murdered the master and seized the master's crown. But in the kingdom of Judah, without an exception, the crown is handed down from father to son in lineal descent for a thousand years. Even in periods of Israel's captivity Judah's prince and heir to royal honors was recognized as ruler of the people. The scepter was still in Judah's hand. To Judah's tribe belonged the kings—the heaven-appointed kings. That throne of ivory, covered with gold, adorned with lions, Judah's symbol, was never dishonored by usurper, but all down the ages was occupied by Judah's men. Never sat there a

king in Jerusalem, on Judah's throne, that was not in lineal descent from Judah, Jacob's royal son.

Was there a limit to this glory? Was there a limit in the prophetic word "until"? How long shall the lion perch on Judah's standard? How long shall the scepter be in Judah's hand? How long shall this pre-eminence be Judah's portion? Forever? Nay, "Until." There is a line of limitation sharply drawn. Can we find it? Can we clearly see and trace it? "The scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come." The limit of Judah's glory is his greatest glory. This is a remarkable prophecy. This is a battle-field where with arguments men have met and fought. No wonder that Jew and Christian seek to discern the true meaning of these words. The scepter was not forever to be held by Judah's hands. It was to depart. When? At Shiloh's coming. His coming would somehow mark the wrenching of the scepter from Judah's hand, the plucking of the crown from Judah's brow, the fading of the lion on Judah's standard.

Judah had the scepter once. Of this there is no doubt. Has the scepter departed from Judah? It has, beyond a doubt. Judah has no crown, no throne, no scepter, no royalty to-day. When did these royal insignia depart from Judah? Does history tell? It surely does. The facts are not unknown. Herod, called the Great, is dead.

He is the last king of the Jews. He had fortified his royal right in every possible way. He is now dead; lies in state. Purple robes are around him. A crown and scepter, though by death wrenched from his grasp, adorn his bier. With muffled drums and fragrant incense the body of Judah's last king is carried to its tomb in the Herodium. Judah's royalty is at an end. From that day to this no scepter has been held by any representing Judah's tribe. There was one effort made to prolong and perpetuate Judah's royal rule. It was made by Herod's son. But Augustus, Emperor of Rome, forbade the title and refused to confer the crown. Then it was the Jewish people cried: "We have no king but Cæsar." These are all plain facts. The time had come, of which Jacob spoke. The scepter had departed from Judah.

Did anything about this time occur that might be construed as a fulfillment of Jacob's other words, "Until Shiloh come"? Had Shiloh come? Shiloh means peace. There, close by where was laid Judah's last king, where were composed the hands that held the scepter, had recently been born the Prince of Peace. At His birth the angels sang "Shiloh on earth." Herod sought to kill the child. But it was Herod who must go. So the last king of Judah with reluctance laid his scepter down, as if to tell the world Shiloh had come indeed. What about the lion? The true Lion of the tribe of

Judah had come. The type had touched its antetype, and had vanished. Within the Sanhedrin, which Herod had convened to ascertain where Messiah should be born, was one whose father, a most learned rabbi, had said: "The Scriptures clearly teach that within fifteen years the Messiah shall appear."

Remarkable prophecy! Remarkable fulfillment! Blessed be God! Shiloh had come. A heavenly royalty is His right. A scepter of universal power is in His hand. A crown of fadeless glory rests on His brow.

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!"

VI

ZEBULUN

"Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea;
And he shall be for an haven of ships;
And his border shall be unto Zidon."

—GEN. 49: 13.

A FEW strokes of the artist present to us here an attractive picture. We look upon a haven of the sea. Zebulun's symbol is a goodly harbor, whose calm, quiet, capacious waters are a safe retreat from the perils of the stormy sea. Nor is it water nor capacity only; nor only a retreat ready and waiting to welcome the mariner who seeks safety and rest; not merely a beautiful seaport inviting residence and repose; not a harbor traced by ruins, once prosperous, now fallen to decay. But it is a stirring scene of active life. Vessels of varied sails grace the harbor. It is "a haven of ships." Many and different crafts, coming and going, adorn "the haven of the sea." The merchant ship grapples the shore with strong cables, empties its treasures from other lands, and stores in its hold native produce for distant ports. All is activity. All is life. Zebulun is a haven of ships.

Such is the picture; such the symbol. What does this symbol signify? There are in it suggestions of abode, manner of life, occupation, and character. It suggests that the tribe of Zebulun might be called the merchants and mariners of Israel. Zebulun means "dwelling." Here again is the alliteration of which Jacob seems very fond: "Dwelling shall dwell at the haven of the sea."

I.—THE PERSONAL FEATURES: ZEBULUN

THE MAN

Very little is recorded of Zebulun. But that little is worthy of our notice. He is the sixth and last son of Jacob and Leah. His name tells the same sad story of Leah's heart trouble. She wrote her domestic sorrows in her sons' names. It is a story written all through her life—an alienated husband, a jealous wife. At the birth of this sixth son she exclaimed, "Surely now my husband will dwell with me!" Her bright hope, however, destined to be dimmed, reflects its cheer in the name she gives the babe. She calls him "Dwelling."

Zebulun is the sixth and last son of Leah. In the order of mention his name is fifth. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, have been mentioned in the exact order of their ages. In the same order Issachar would come next. But Zebulun for some reason takes precedence of him. The sixth is put

before the fifth. The younger of these two is first called. Zebulun receives his blessing before Issachar. Why is this? No answer can be definitely given to this question. But in this fact there is a suggestiveness.

Leah's sons were six: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. These are divided into two classes. The first four are born in rapid succession. Among these, Judah, the youngest, is given the pre-eminence. The next two, Issachar and Zebulun, are born in close succession, but after a long interval which separates them from the preceding four. So these two younger sons constitute a class by themselves. Jacob puts the younger before the older, as he so often does. Jacob was himself a supplanter. He obtained the birthright from Esau, his older brother. He persistently perpetuates the inverse order that marked his own career, the younger first. Not in his own sons only does he this, but in his grandsons too. Joseph brought his sons Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob for his patriarchal blessing. He brought them to the blind old man so that Manasseh would come under Jacob's right hand of larger blessing and Ephraim under the left hand of minor blessing. But Jacob, suspecting this, crossed his hands, exchanged the blessings, and forever reversed the order of the names. That act forever stamped the phrase: Ephraim and Manasseh. So here, by the

patriarch's arbitrary act, it is now Zebulun and Issachar.

Another fact merits notice. Circumstances naturally would bind Zebulun and Issachar together and make them constant friends and daily companions in childhood and youth. There was much jealousy in Jacob's family. There were whole brothers and half-brothers. Their mothers were not on the best of terms. There were four mothers and four sets of boys. Jealousies must have been handed down from the mothers to the sons. Domestic broils could scarcely have been rare. Leah's sons must have been bound closely together and must have felt their importance, an importance coming from their mother's rank. The first four were much older than the other two. While they therefore were abroad in their pleasures or their duties, little Zebulun and Issachar, circling still around their mother's tent, under her immediate care, wove closer the bond of common age and parentage. Cut off from their whole brothers by difference of ages, cut off from their half-brothers by petty jealousies, these two to each other the more closely clung. The bond, thus formed and strengthened, endured. It not only endured during their lives, but in the record of their tribes it is easily traced three hundred years afterwards. When Moses pronounced his parting blessings on the tribes, he unites in one blessing Zebulun and Issa-

char. When by lot a division of the land is made, a kind providence gives to these two friendly tribes adjoining portions. Thus were they still closely bound.

When Jacob and his family moved down to Egypt Joseph took five of his brethren and presented them to Pharaoh. Why five is not explained. Which five it is not recorded. Jewish tradition, ever fertile in expedients for filling up the gaps of the inspired word, mentions Zebulun as the first of these five. Why first there is no explanation. These facts are all that can be affirmed about the man.

II.—THE LOCAL FEATURE: THE HOME OF THE TRIBE OF ZEBULUN

The next feature of Jacob's prophecy concerning Zebulun is local. It suggests the geography of the tribe, in the settlement in the land of Canaan. Jacob describes Zebulun's home. He pictures the exact locality which Zebulun by lot should receive and occupy, and where the tribe shall dwell. His symbol is a haven of the sea. Of what use and of what purport would such a symbol be to a tribe ensconced amid the hills, guarded by rugged mountains, denizens of desert or strangers to the sea? Zebulun is a haven. His portion somehow must be connected with the sea. But even that is not all and does not exhaust the features of the picture

Jacob drew. There is a long seacoast of Israel that extends from Tyre and Sidon in the north to the river of Egypt in the south. What part of this long shore line marks the haven where Zebulun shall dwell? His borders shall be toward Zidon. Thus definitely, three hundred years before the distribution of the land, is marked out the portion where Zebulun shall dwell.

The three hundred years have passed. The time has come for the division of Canaan. How shall it be accomplished? The division was made in three stages. First, two and a half tribes by special arrangement settled east of Jordan. They received their allotment at the hand of Moses. Second, after Moses' death and the passage of the Jordan, Joshua began the distribution by the settlement of Judah and Joseph. Then there was a long interval, in which the distribution for some reason was arrested. Seven tribes remained yet unprovided for. The host still kept up its thorough, compact organization, and camped around the old Tabernacle at Gilgal. When the Tabernacle was moved from Gilgal the distribution was resumed. It was executed in the following manner: A company of surveyors was organized, three men from each tribe, to make a survey of all the undivided land, and to divide it into portions according to the number of the unsettled tribes. All this they did, and described the boundaries in a book. The por-

tions of land were divided off, and the boundaries were written in a book, before the lots were drawn. Then the lots were drawn. The appeal was made to God. He determined where each tribe should dwell. By the lot He guided each tribe to its home as truly and as surely as ever by the Pillar of Cloud He led Israel through all their wanderings to the borders of the land. In this allotment of the remaining tribes Zebulun's name comes third. He is the ninth in all the list to receive his portion. The tribes are settling all around. When his turn has come, and his lot is drawn, it is precisely what Jacob long ago had said: A haven of the sea!

The tract of Zebulun connects the two seas of the land. Its eastern limit is the pebbled shore of Galilee; its western limit is washed by the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Draw a line from the northern extremity of the Sea of Galilee westward till it reaches the Great Sea; then draw a line from the southern extremity of the Sea of Galilee westward to the Great Sea; with slight modification between these lines will be found Zebulun's portion. It is bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, with its only haven along Israel's coast, Accho or Acre, famed in story; on the east by the Galilean Sea and its numerous havens, celebrated in sacred song.

Thus we are taught the manner in which God carries out the purpose of His grace and love. He

makes the prophecy. He draws the plan. He writes the boundaries in His book. We live, and toil, and plan, and achieve, and do our will. God is glorified. His purpose is served. His will is obeyed. His kingdom stands. How well the tribal standard, which, emblazoned with its symbol, led the column many years suits the home to which the tribe is now divinely led! If we were wiser, we should oftener sing:

"In each event of life how clear
Thy ruling hand I see;
Each blessing to my soul most dear,
Because conferred by Thee."

III.—THE TRIBAL FEATURE: THE LIFE OF THE TRIBE OF ZEBULUN

Another glance at Jacob's prophecy about Zebulun reveals a tribal feature. It may have been a resultant of the tribal home. There is a commercial aspect of the scene that attracts our notice. Jacob tells where Zebulun shall dwell; then suggests what calling the tribe shall pursue. Their home suggests and creates their business. They are to be the merchants and mariners of Israel. Commerce is the chief characteristic of the tribe. Not that all were merchants and mariners. But seafaring life and merchandise are distinctive features of the tribe. Export and import, interchange of

home and foreign produce, these mark the tribe. People make their homes. Every home comes to bear the impress of those who dwell within it and have the right to call it home. Home makes its people too. There is no one who lives that does not bear the impress of his home. Everyone is what his surroundings have made him. There is a sculpturing ever going on, by which character is made. The stroke may not be heard. The power is surely felt. A gentle hand, firm and steady, is carving out from day to day man's character and destiny. He who stands on the wave-washed shore looks out over the vast restless sea, listens to the music of its waves, and braces against its storms, must be a different man from the mountaineer. Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea. Then his destiny is fixed. His home will bring him to his great lifework. He will learn to be a sailor, and, if a sailor, a merchant too.

Zebulun quickly learned the lesson which the sea billows taught. It is asserted with great emphasis by a Jewish writer that Zebulun is commemorated as the first to navigate a skiff upon the sea. But let us not, amid the clouds of Jewish tradition, stop our search. Let us come to the surer Scriptures and to well-authenticated facts of history. How shall we judge of the commercial importance of this tribe? There are no annual reports through which to search for facts. There is no history of its mer-

cantile transactions. The facts established are very sparse. What shall we do? Suppose a map of this country is unrolled before us. We are asked to point out the commercial centers of the land. Would we not say these centers will be found where the highways of travel are seen to converge? This is emphatically true where the highways of land and the highways of water come together. Now it is not difficult to note that the highways of Israel's land tell by their convergence where Israel's commerce was enthroned.

East of Jordan there was a public way, broad and well built, frequented by the crowd—ascending the valley of the Jordan, crossing westward by a bridge just south of the Sea of Galilee, then turning northward, leading to the shore washed by the crystal waters of that beautiful inland sea. Thus are we brought to the eastern border of Zebulun. On the western side of Jordan there was also a frequented way leading northward to the same shore of Gennesaret, the dwelling-place of Zebulun. Or, suppose we start at the haven of Accho on the Mediterranean Sea. It is called the “Key of Palestine.” It, in the shadow of Mount Carmel, is the most important seaport on the Syrian coast. From this important point there was a way of travel eastward through Zebulun's inheritance to Gennesaret and Jordan. If we start at Jerusalem, the religious center, perhaps the greatest thoroughfare in all the

land conveys us over the mountain of Ephraim across the plain of Esdraelon, by Nazareth to Genesaret. All these lines of travel center in Zebulun.

The reason of all this is that the mariners of Zebulun brought home from their voyages the varied products of other lands. On the shores of the Great Sea and the Sea of Galilee there sprang up industries which caused the land of Zebulun to be called "the manufacturing district" of Palestine. At one time the waters of the Galilean Sea were plowed by four thousand vessels of every kind, from the proud three-master to the rude fishing-boat of Bethsaida.

Commercial marts are noted for one peculiarity among others—the confluence of varied types of humanity. The brisker the trade the greater the variety. Farming countries are not the resort of foreigners; but mercantile centers are. All about these havens of Zebulun Jews and Gentiles are strangely mingled. The restless Arab of the desert with his aromatic spices is here side by side with the enterprising Phenician with his goods of Tyrian purple. Here the Syrian and the haughty Roman and the æsthetic Greek often meet. The language of the country is modified by foreign contact.

Within the borders of Zebulun were not only the fisheries of the sea and the haven of ships, but the sacred mountains of Carmel and Tabor and the village of Nazareth, where most of Christ's life was

spent, and the Galilean cities, where most of Christ's mighty works were performed. It was from the men who dwelt within Zebulun's borders that Christ formed the band of his Apostles. Peter and Andrew, James and John, left their haven by the sea, their boats and fishing-tackle, and followed Jesus to become fishers of men. Hence in the ministry of Christ time and again we are brought into contact with seafaring life and mercantile pursuits.

The best soldiers in the world's great armies have been those recruited from commercial life and mercantile pursuit. It is not the farmer boy that makes the best soldier. It is the merchant and his clerk. Therefore we are not surprised to hear the eulogy Deborah pronounced on Zebulun: "Zebulun is a people that threw away its life even unto death." At a later day: "Of Zebulun, such as went forth in battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of a double heart." The merchant princes became the military heroes of the land.

IV.—THE RELIGIOUS FEATURE: THE CHARACTER OF THE TRIBE OF ZEBULUN

Moses gives an additional feature in his blessings on the tribe of Zebulun, the religious feature. "Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out. They shall call the people unto the mount. There shall

they offer sacrifices of righteousness. For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas." God opened His highways of commerce, and He bade them rejoice in that commerce. They sucked in the abundance of the seas, grew rich, and rejoiced in their riches. Mark two directions of their religious life.

First.—They were missionaries of divine truth; missionaries of commerce and missionaries of truth. They called the people to the mount—the sacred mount—Mount Zion. The ship that sailed laden with the product of the land bore also to distant shores the tidings of Jehovah. The sailor as he walked the streets of foreign marts spoke of his Jehovah. The merchant, as he met the Arab, Syrian, Phenician, in his counting-room, in the market-place, did not forget his allegiance to his God, but commended Jehovah to the stranger from the foreign land. The merchant and the mariner were missionaries. They sought to bring the enlarging circle of their acquaintance to the sacred mount.

The first foreign missionary of whom we read was a man of Zebulun. God said to Jonah: "Go to Nineveh." Jonah preferred to go to sea. True to the symbol of his tribe, he sought the haven of the sea—rushed to the seacoast, entrusted himself to the rolling billows.

Oh, for merchant princes inspired with Christian

missionary zeal! The greatest obstacle to missions in the foreign field is the wicked lives of irreligious men that hail from Christian lands who by their conduct seem to give the lie to the message of truth. True sons of Zebulun while they suck abundant riches from the seas, conspire to tell the greater riches of truth and grace.

Second.—They offer sacrifices of righteousness. God made them rich, and according to their riches they gave. They came up to the Temple, and came laden with the treasures of the seas. They were not impoverished by their gifts. Honor the Lord with thy substance, with the firstfruits of all thy increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst with new wine. Free handedness toward God is the true road to riches—the road to true riches. Abundant harvest and overflowing vintage often put covetousness to shame. A niggardly spirit toward God spares the seed corn and contracts the harvest.

Zebulun settles where Jacob prophesied, and where God led the tribe to dwell. He adapts himself to the character of his inheritance. He becomes a seafaring and mercantile tribe. Wealth rolls in upon him. He forgets not God who gave. He proclaims the living God to all to whom he goes, to all who come to him. He leads them to the sacred mount, and lays his choicest treasures on the Altar of his God.

VII

ISSACHAR

“ Issachar is a strong ass
Couching between two burdens :
And he saw that rest was good,
And the land that it was pleasant ;
And bowed his shoulder to bear,
And became a servant unto tribute.”

—GEN. 49: 14-16.

ISSACHAR is the fifth of Leah's sons in the order of their ages; in the order of patriarchal blessing the sixth and last. In our studies of the Tribes he concludes the first section of Jacob's family, namely, Leah's sons. There is very little known about Issachar the man. Nothing indeed can be added to his record beyond what has been mentioned in connection with Zebulun. Almost without notice he passes through the scenes of patriarchal life. His name rarely appears in the historic page. The child is born, is named, unmentioned lives, performs his part, achieves his destiny. From obscurity he emerges when his dying father calls his sons to receive their blessings from him ere he departs. Jacob knew him, and faithfully no doubt portrays

him. Certainly no tribe was more clearly marked in life and character; none more clearly pictured by prophetic word.

I.—ISSACHAR'S SYMBOL

“Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens.” Thus far, in considering these symbols of the tribes of Israel, we have been called to note two water scenes, Reuben’s vessel of water and Zebulun’s haven of the sea; two weapons of violence, Simeon’s and Levi’s swords; two animals, Judah’s lion and Issachar’s ass. The ass which here represents the tribe of Issachar is a beast of burden, large, strong, swift, and spirited; a beast in that day valued and highly regarded for its worth and excellent qualities. The horse, a special pride of the Egyptians, was to the Israelites a forbidden animal. The ass was therefore Israel’s chief beast of burden.

Issachar is represented here as “couching down between two burdens.” To receive the correct impression of this symbol we must at once get rid of the thought conveyed by the word “burden.” There is no such thought conveyed by the Hebrew word. The word rendered “burdens” means “borders,” or landmarks, or sides of a stall, the partitions that mark off and enclose a stall. The suggestion of the English wording of this verse is erroneous—a poor, hard-worked beast of burden, cruelly laden, a burden on one side and a burden

on the other side, and between the two crushed down to earth. Jacob's thought is a very different one—a good, strong, well-fed beast of burden, in his bedded stall, between the projecting sides, lying down to enjoy his rest in satisfaction and quiet. The thought intended is not pity for a poor ill-used beast, but pleasure at the ample provision made for it, and its evident enjoyment of its portion.

This symbol at once suggests agricultural life and pursuits. Issachar shall be the rural tribe, given to agricultural work, and becoming the farming tribe of Israel. His people shall be marked by a devotion to the tillage of the field, by a love for the fruitful soil. They shall successfully cultivate the land. The symbolic beast of burden marks their great agency in this noble lifework. Their labors shall be crowned with success. Rich harvest shall reward their toil. Their barns shall be filled. Their beasts of burden shall be well fed and repose in quietness and ease. Happy rural life and successful agricultural toil are well represented by the beast that knows his master's crib, and rejoices in his comfortable stall. Labor and rest, contentment and abundance, quiet and happy homes, these are features of the picture in which Issachar appears.

II.—ISSACHAR'S LAND

The inheritance of Issachar was the farming portion of Israel's land. The richest soil was his.

The harvest fields were pre-eminently his. His was the portion that responded with largest yield to the ripping plow and the scattered grain. Surely Issachar had no reason to complain of his noble and suitable inheritance. After Zebulun is settled, the next to draw his lot and find his home is Issachar. He draws, and by his lot is assigned to a section adjoining Zebulun, and immediately south of that friendly tribe. Issachar's inheritance corresponds with what is known as the plain of Esdraelon, or, as it is sometimes called, the Valley of Jezreel. Jezreel is the Hebrew word, and Esdraelon is the Greek word, the meaning of which is "God's Planting." We lose many valuable lessons and suggestions by not knowing the meaning of these old Bible names. Untranslated, they are often mines of treasure unopened, unexplored.

Josephus, one of the coldest and least emotional of writers, whose pen emits no spark of fire, to whom enthusiasm is well-nigh a stranger, as he writes of Esdraelon's Plain grows, for him, somewhat enthusiastic as he says that a man needs only to gaze upon the lovely plain of Esdraelon to be in love with agricultural pursuits. Happily indeed the beautiful plain is called "God's Planting." Man may break up his fallow, cast abroad his grain, cultivate his soil, but God only can garnish earth with such exquisite loveliness as luxuriates in the great valley of Jezreel. Let us in imagination visit

this beautiful and productive valley, mark its boundaries, descry its beauties, and learn its fitness for the tribe that to it was divinely led.

The Holy Land, as it has now so long been called, is a strip of country about 140 miles long, north and south, by about 40 miles wide, east and west. It narrows considerably toward the north. It is hemmed in on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the deep valley of the Jordan and the seas which it connects. It is essentially a hill country. In the main it is one ridge of hills extending north and south. This central ridge dips gently westward toward the sea, but suddenly and precipitately eastward toward the Jordan. The western slope gradually merges into the plains of Philistia and Sharon, whose sandy shores touch the western waves; the eastern dip rapidly descends into the Jordan gorge. Longitudinally we have the seaboard plain, the central mountain range, the valley of the Jordan. This central ridge is broken in one place only, about halfway between its northern and southern extremities. This only latitudinal valley, the one valley that crosses the country east and west, this break in the mountain ridge, is the plain of Esdraelon, or the great Valley of Jezreel. It extends from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. On the sea-shore it is very narrow, being a defile in the shadow of Carmel. Eastward it gently rises and widens for three-fourths of its distance to the

Jordan. Here its progress is intercepted by two mountains that stand up in the midst of the plain. One is Little Hermon, at whose base nestles the village of Endor, where the witch of Endor lived. There also is Nain, where the widow's son was raised. There too was Shunem, where dwelt the Shunammite. The other mountain is Gilboa, on whose gentle declivity the royal city of Jezreel was built. These two mountains divide the great valley into three arms. The southernmost is soon lost amid the mountains. The northernmost is small and unrenowned. The central is of these three the largest, and retains the name of Jezreel. Amid fertile slopes and luxuriant growth it rapidly descends to the deep gorge of Jordan. Passing down through it, there on the right of Gilboa is the beautiful city of Jezreel; on the left on Little Hermon is Shunem; in front is the city of Bethshean, an island of beauty in a sea of foliage and flowers. The river Kishon and the brook Bethshean irrigate, wash, and drain this mighty plain.

Issachar's symbol directs attention to the mountain walls that enclose this valley. On the north the mountains of Zebulun present an unbroken line of barriers to the extended plain. The tallest of them all, just over against Little Hermon and Gilboa, is Tabor, where the northern armies gathered to overlook this plain. On the south the mountains of Manasseh stand to mark sharply the bound-

aries of the plain. Amid their spurs rests the city of Megiddo, like a queen on her throne surveying her fair domain. Such in its physical features is the great Valley of Jezreel.

Who is it we see dwelling in these lowlands of loveliness and plenty, dwelling in contentment between the towering mountains on the north and the towering mountains on the south, dwelling in this only great valley of Israel's land? Who is it? The men of Issachar, strong, stalwart men, of whom Jacob has said they shall couch between the borders and rest in the profusion of their luxuries. Here are the mountain borders, here the delightful place of rest and plenty. "And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant." If a glimpse at such an attractive scene stirred the unsentimental soul of Josephus, if the record of its charms kindles any admiration in the reader, what must have been the effect of dwelling there? Issachar saw that the land was pleasant, and immediately couched between its borders and dwelt in contentment there.

III.—ISSACHAR'S MEN

If the land was a farm, the owners and dwellers must have come to be farmers, the tillers of the fertile soil. Agricultural scenes abound in the Bible. After the settlement of the tribes in Canaan we need

not be surprised to find that many of these rural scenes of peace, plenty, and honest toil are furnished by the Valley of Jezreel, and illustrate the character of Issachar. From a general survey of the plain, let us visit some of these homes of Issachar. The people to whom we come may be those whom in story we long have known. But it may be new to trace their tribal feature and to meet them in their tribal home. Beginning at the Jordan limit of Issachar's inheritance and proceeding westward through the fertile plain, we shall trace the noted homes and people that have made the tribe renowned, not forgetting to mention the symbol which marks each homestead and the people dwelling there.

1. *Elisha*.—Just as we start, just where the Jezreel and the Jordan valleys merge, where their fertility is mingled, is found Elisha's home. He is a young man now. He cultivates the land on which he was born. He has been no wanderer. Why should he have been a wanderer? He saw the land, that it was pleasant. His earliest home was the garden spot of Canaan. The name of his place is Abel Meholah, "the Meadow of the Dance." It is rich meadow-land. We reach the place to find that Elisha himself, though a man of means, is not ashamed to toil. He has at once a dozen plows at work, a double team to each. He is himself following the twelfth. While he is at work, the Jordan

thundering down its rapids on one side, the brook Bethshean gurgling in its course on the other side, Elisha hears a call. Elijah, as if he had dropped from the clouds, lets fall a mantle on Elisha's shoulder. It is a symbolic call to the prophetic office. The call is sudden. The call is strong. The rich young man of Issachar leaves his aged parents, leaves his fertile meadow, leaves his riches, leaves the home he fondly loves, leaves the pursuit to which he was devoted, and dedicates himself to what proved to be a hard, laborious service in the cause of God.

2. *The Shunammite*.—On the side of Little Hermon, near its base, is the village of Shunem. In a little nook at the foot of the mountain, encircled by cheerful gardens and luxuriant fields of corn, there lives a great farmer of Issachar. His pious wife delights to entertain Elisha, the man of God, as from time to time he passes along that way. The hospitable man at the suggestion of his wife builds a prophet's chamber for Elisha. In it a bed, a table, a stool, a candle-stick. Simply, yet amply furnished, it meets every need. In return for such kindness Elisha asked if he might not confer a favor on the farmer and his wife by mentioning them to the king, or to the captain of Israel's host. Now mark the answer: "I dwell among mine own people." Couching in contentment, he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant.

He was very much obliged, but he did not need anything. Contented home!

One day the only son of this farmer went out to his father to the reapers on the broad fields of harvest. The heat was for the youth too great. He was prostrated by it. He cried to his father: "My head! My head!" And he said, "Carry him to his mother." Some of the reapers stopped their work and carried the unconscious lad to his mother. He sat on her knees till noon, and died. At her command the ass was saddled. Swiftly she rode over Esdraelon's plain, to Carmel by the sea, where the prophet was. Elisha: "Is it well with thee? thy husband? child?" She: "It is well." When Elisha heard of her deep sorrow he said to Gehazi, "Go with her and lay this rod upon the child." "No," said she, "I will not go without thee." So the prophet went, and raised to life the Shunammite's child, and brought joy once more into the family of the man of Issachar.

3. *Naboth*.—Naboth lived and farmed on the outskirts of the royal city of Jezreel, just opposite Shunem, on Mount Gilboa. His circumstances were peculiar. He had a troublesome neighbor. That neighbor was his king. King Ahab's capital was at Samaria. But like many other kings, for him one palace was not enough. The fairest, most beautiful, most attractive spot in all the land must be his. Where shall that be? He decides to build

a new palace in the valley of Jezreel. He makes the happiest selection of a site. He builds on the brow of Mount Gilboa, the mountain that stands in the midst of Jezreel's valley. Here he builds a tower, a watch-tower. It was from this tower years afterwards that the watchman, looking down toward Jordan, said, "I see a company." A messenger is sent to meet it. Watchman: "He came unto them, but cometh not. The driving is like the driving of Jehu; he driveth furiously." The king said, "Make ready." King Ahab built also an ivory palace at Jezreel, a beautiful, glorious, and splendid building. He beautified the palace grounds. All was fair enough to please a king.

There was one thing that sadly marred the pleasure of the king in his splendid palace and royal grounds. There was a vineyard in his way—a little farm owned and tilled and occupied by Naboth, a man of Issachar. The subject's farm marred the symmetry and beauty of the palace grounds. So thought the king. The king wished the farm. His first offer, it may be, was fair enough. It implied the farmer's right to hold his own. "Give it to me, and I will give you a better vineyard, or its worth in money." What said the true son of Issachar to his king? "As for the money, I should rather have the land. As for the better vineyard, this one suits me. It is mine. God forbid that I should part with my inheritance." Couching down between the

borders, he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant. The contented farmer this son of Issachar surely was. He did not feel at all incommoded by having a royal neighbor.

Crossed in his purpose, the feeble-minded Ahab went to bed and lost his appetite. The farmer continued to dwell in happiness, content to till his ground. With admirable resoluteness he maintained his right and held his home. But unequal was the contest between the subject and his king. At last it cost Naboth his life. False witnesses are sworn. They testify that Naboth had blasphemed his God. From his cottage of comfort and contentment he is dragged. He is stoned to death. His family is turned out. The rich King Ahab, who lived in an ivory palace, added the little farm on which the family of Issachar had happily dwelt to his own royal gardens and ample palace grounds.

IV.—ISSACHAR'S TROUBLES

“He bowed his shoulder to bear; He became a servant to tribute.” All professions and employments have their trials and difficulties. Every man knows best what burdens rest on his shoulders and wherein he becomes a servant to tribute. No man should think that because he knows these things so well other callings are exempt from sharp trials. There is a burden for every man's shoulders to bear. There is a servitude to tribute for every man.

Issachar had a rich inheritance—and great misfortunes too. Blessed with a choice portion of land, possessors, contented possessors of the lovely and fertile plain, yet this tribe of Issachar suffered perhaps more than any other tribe. He bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute. His was a hard lot. His lovely valley was Israel's battlefield. Fair scene, beautiful valley, waving with grain, clothed in richest verdure, calm and quiet as the arching skies that form its canopy, picture of peace, its history is written in letters of blood. The four most momentous battles of Israel's history were fought on this lovely plain; two for Israel glorious victories; two, signal, disastrous defeats.

1. *Barak's Victory over Sisera*.—Sisera the general poured his soldiers down into this plain. Barak marshaled his ten thousand men against them. A storm of sleet and hail bursting on the plain drove full in the faces of the Canaanites. The floods of rain descended, and the Kishon rose, overflowed its banks, and swept the Canaanites away. It was on the occasion of this victory that Deborah sang her memorable Ode of Triumph.

2. *Gideon's Victory over the Midianites*.—The Midianites camped in the Valley of Jezreel. Gideon sounds the note of war. Soldiers flock to his standard. His camp is on Gilboa. Thirty-two thousand men respond to his trumpet call. There

are too many. Those who fear go away. Ten thousand are left. There are too many. They drink at the Spring of Harod. Those that lap the water are chosen—three hundred men against the uncounted thousands. Like the Spartan band of Leonidas at Thermopylae, these three hundred warriors put the host of Midian to flight.

3. *Saul's Defeat*.—On this same ground King Saul marshals the armies of Israel and fights his last battle. The Philistines camp on Little Harmon. Israel is on Gilboa. Saul's brave heart somehow is trembling. He is afraid. God has forsaken him. He stands, he feels, alone. The prophets have left him. His best counselors have turned their faces from him now. What shall he do? He goes under covert of darkness to the witch of Endor's cave. Oh, what a change! What a sad descent! To her: "Call me up Samuel." But his destiny is carved. His ruin is wrought. It is too late. His army flees. He falls on his sword, and with his blood stains Jezreel's soil. Israel's standard goes down in dire disaster and defeat.

4. *Josiah's Defeat*.—The king of Egypt marches against Assyria. All he asks of Israel is unmolested to pass up the seaboard plain, around Carmel, and over the Valley of Jezreel, to his destination in the east. But Josiah forbids his passage. King of Egypt: "What have I to do with thee, thou King of Judah?" Josiah posted troops

at the city of Megiddo, in the plain, so as to attack and defeat Pharaoh's armies as they made attempt to pass. But the archers of Egypt gave Josiah a fatal wound, and another and better king goes down on Israel's plain. Long and sincerely and profoundly Israel mourned the good Josiah's fall. It was the saddest defeat that Israel ever suffered. The bright hopes of better days that centered in good Josiah's life and reign suddenly went down in the darkness of despair. Henceforth greatest sorrow was likened to the mourning in the Valley of Megiddo.

5. *A Coming Battle.*—Well might profoundest feelings be aroused by the battle of Megiddo. The scene of the illustrious victories of Barak and Gideon was now overcast with the terrible disasters of Saul and Josiah. Here was seen the beginning of the end, when the crown should be plucked from David's line. Hence the mystic significance which surrounds the name of this battlefield. The seer of Patmos, John the Divine, reared on the borders of this battlefield, familiar with its history, employs the scene of Israel's most signal defeats by their bitterest enemies, the Philistines and Egyptians, for the great coming conflict of Armageddon, a city of Megiddo, which will avenge all such defeats by the final overthrow of all earthly powers that oppose the Kingdom of the Lord.

VIII

DAN

“Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.
Dan shall be a serpent by the way,
An adder in the path,
That biteth the horse heels,
So that his rider shall fall backward.
I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.”
—GEN. 49: 16-18.

THE last sentence of this blessing some construe as an ejaculation of the patriarch. Having completed Dan's blessing, he is supposed in these words to have given vent to his own experience, and to have expressed his welcome to the signal of his own release. There are reasons, however, for supposing that this language is a part of Dan's blessing. There is certainly good reason for thinking that the tribe of Dan so considered it. This will appear as we proceed in this tribal study.

I.—TRIBAL SYMBOL

“Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder

in the path." A venomous serpent about the color of the sand in the footpath or way of travel is effectually concealed. From its place of concealment it plunges its envenomed fang into the horse's heels, and the unsuspecting rider is dismounted. The horned serpent, to which Jacob is thought here to refer, sometimes hides itself in the sand, leaving only its two hornlike protuberances above the surface. These do the effective work. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path.

The symbolic meaning may readily be traced. There is a general human antipathy to the serpent of every kind. Between man and the serpent there is deep-seated enmity. But the significance of the serpent is not altogether bad. In many serpents there is great beauty, which we might see and appreciate and admire if we could only get rid of certain thoughts and associations always suggested by the serpent kind. The serpent represents great subtlety. The Bible so teaches: the serpent is the most subtle beast of the field. It is the cunning beast. Dan is the cunning tribe. Dan was always more noted for craft than for courage. A warlike tribe, whose warfare was rendered illustrious not so much by valorous deeds as by strategic skill, cunning design, successful ambush, ingenious maneuver. Always Dan is the adder in the path, springing from unnoticed coil on unwary traveler.

II.—TRIBAL RANK

A serpent in the path cannot safely be ignored. Whatever else may remain unnoticed, the venomous reptile in the way must have a certain sort of attention from those who are passing by. Dan is an important tribe and occupies a prominent place in the great host of Israel. Jacob's sons are divided into four classes, according to their mothers: Leah's sons, Rachel's sons, Zilpah's sons, Bilhah's sons. Zilpah and Bilhah being servants, their sons would be somewhat subordinates. When, therefore, Jacob proceeds to pronounce his parting blessings on his sons, and appoint them heads of tribes, and give to them severally symbols of prophetic import, the question doubtless arises in the minds of the expectant group what rank the subordinate sons shall hold, and how it shall be with their tribes. Certainly the servants' sons in eagerness await their father's notice and his decisive words. Will their portions and their destinies fall short of what is pronounced on the others? Leah's sons one by one have come at their father's call. The trembling hands of Jacob have rested on each of them, and their destinies have been pronounced. Now Dan is called. Dan is Bilhah's son. Bilhah is Rachel's maid. Here is a test case. Shall the servant's son inherit equally with the proud sons of Leah? Will there be no discrimination in favor of Leah and

Rachel, against Zilpah and Bilhah? Jacob reads their thoughts. His words answer their unspoken questions. "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." That settles the question of rank. This does not mean that Dan in any special sense shall judge the other tribes. His tribe is not to be distinctively a tribe of judges, though one of the most famous judges belonged to this tribe. But the meaning is Dan in no way shall come behind the other sons. He shall judge his tribe, just as each of Leah's sons shall judge his tribe. There is to be no inherent subordination. Here also comes to notice Jacob's favorite rhetorical figure. Dan means Judge. Judge shall judge his tribe as a tribe. Though he is a servant's son, his presence shall not be ignored. Let all be warned: a serpent by the way, an adder in the path. Let none tread on his rights. There are several historical illustrations of this high rank of Dan.

First.—There is numerical importance. Numbers make the tribe of Dan one of the foremost tribes of Israel. At Sinai and at Jordan, where the two reckonings were made, with a fearful wilderness and forty dreary years between, Dan holds the second place. The same steadiness which secures to Judah constant pre-eminence and makes him first always, secures to Dan the uniformity of second place in the mighty host. This high rank of numbers is the more remarkable in view of the

fact that he is in age the fifth of Jacob's sons. Also, his own immediate family seems to have been quite small. Only one son of Dan is mentioned. Under the divine blessing the tribe of Dan at Sinai numbers 62,700, and at Jordan 64,400.

Second.—There is official importance. The camp of Israel was arranged with great precision to minute detail. In it military order reigned. It was rectilinear, somewhat longer east and west than north and south. The central object of the camp was Jehovah's Tent. About the Tabernacle and its rectilinear court all the camp was formed. Nearest the court, on its four sides, were the priests—the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and the Merarites. Outside of these were Israel's four great camps. One camp of three tribes on each side. These four camps bore the names severally of their leading tribes. These four commanding tribes were Judah, Ephraim, Reuben, and Dan. Judah's camp was composed wholly of Leah's sons. Ephraim's wholly of Rachel's sons. Reuben's partly of Leah's and partly of Zilpah's sons. Dan's wholly of servants' sons. This was a distinguished honor conferred on Dan to be commander of one-fourth of the host of Israel. In the march, while the great tribe of Judah led the van, the great tribe of Dan covered the rear of the pilgrim line.

Third.—There is religious importance. The three great families of Levi were apportioned

among the tribes after their settlement in Canaan according to rank, the most honorable family to the most important tribes. Of the forty-eight Levitical cities, the tribe of Dan had four, and to these four were assigned members of the family of Kohath, the most honored class of Levites. This high sacred honor Dan shared with Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh.

Fourth.—There is the importance of inheritance. Dan was the last tribe to be settled. What matters that? It makes no difference in what order God bestows His blessings. The last is often first, and the first is last. Though he was the last, no other tribe could take the portion God marked out for Dan. It is true the portion was very small and the numbers were very great, but the lot possessed eminent advantages and was ample for the mighty tribe. It was one of a noble cluster of tribes. It adjoined Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim.

Dan's inheritance was Shephelah—the lowlands, the seaboard plain—a very productive portion of the land. From Judah's hills it sloped gently to the sea, enriched yearly by dressing from the hills. Year by year it produced prodigious crops of grain. More than other portions of the land it has retained its fertility to this day. For forty centuries its fields have waved with grain. To this inheritance Dan is led. Surrounding plenty welcomes him to his tribal home. The names that make his lot

familiar to us, as places that are well known and found within the borders of his inheritance, are Joppa, Ekron, and Aijalon.

III.—TRIBAL CHARACTER

The symbol not only marks the important rank of Dan, but designates his character. The subtle serpent: The subtle tribe. Dan is the cunning tribe. Cunning has its good and bad development. Dan evinces both. Let us note how these traits crop out in the history of this tribe.

First.—There is a strategic movement of the tribe. The tribe found no fault with the character of their inheritance. Though small, it was large enough and rich enough for them; but one serious difficulty was encountered by them, with which their tribal character unfitted them to cope. To their settlement the Philistines offered stout and resolute resistance. It was too good a home to be readily surrendered. The Philistines drove the men of Dan from Shephelah up to the hills, and compelled them there to stay. The Philistines were great warriors. Their open warfare did not suit the serpent tribe. Instead of boldly buckling on their armor, raising aloft their standard, and bravely driving back the aggressive hordes of Philistines, the men of Dan pursued a very different course, more in keeping with the symbol of the tribe.

They send out five spies to view the land, to find a better place, where an easier settlement might be made. The spies travel northward, gliding in and out, here and there, unsuspected and observant. They come at length to Mount Ephraim, to the home of a certain man named Micah. Here a strange story is told and recorded; a strange picture is presented to our view.

Micah of Mount Ephraim had stolen eleven hundred shekels of silver from his mother. She, the silver being gone out of sight and out of hand, devoted it to Jehovah to make a graven and a molten image, if it should be ever found. One unworthy step was the thought of worshiping the living God by forbidden images. Not less unworthy was the dedication to Jehovah of what was lost. Micah confessed his theft and brought back the money, all the eleven hundred shekels of silver. The woman, who had been so free to give what was not in hand, then dedicated to her religious purpose not eleven hundred shekels, but two hundred shekels. They seemed far more precious when recovered. The images were made and duly set up in Micah's house.

The next thing was to have a priest, a household chaplain, in the rural mansion. It chanced just then that a Levite passed that way. His name is Jonathan, a grandson of Moses. Micah hired him for ten shekels a year, with food and clothes.

At this house and at this juncture the spies of Dan arrive. They are attracted by hearing the voice of a Levite in the Ephraimite's home. The Ephraimite had a peculiar lisp. He could not pronounce "sh," but substituted for it "s." Shibboleth he called Sibboleth. In contrast with this the Levite's voice was noticed. The Levite professes to consult the Lord on the spies' behalf, to learn how it would fare with them, and obtains for them a favorable response—and advises them to go on. They went to the extreme northern limit of the land. Their impressions may best be learned from the report they made on their return. "Arise, let us go up. We have seen the land. Behold, it is very good. Are ye still? When ye go, ye shall come to a people secure and to a large land, a place where there is no want of anything that is in earth." Moved by this appeal, a great colony of Danites leave their southern home and migrate to the north. As they passed the house of Micah at Mount Ephraim they stole his carved image and enticed his priest away by an offer of rich rewards. Onward they move, till they come to the city of Laish in the far north. This city by strategy they take, ere its people have time to call their allies or give alarm. The name of the city is changed to Dan. Within it they set up the stolen image and establish a sanctuary for themselves. All the while that Israel's tabernacle stood at Shiloh there was

this tribal shrine at Dan. The family of Jonathan continued to be priests of Dan till the great captivity.

This whole scheme evinces craftiness and subtlety, and is worthy of the tribe whose symbol was a serpent by the way, an adder in the path. Thus this great tribe was divided, part in the far south, part in the extreme north. The southern inheritance was the Shephelah. What shall we say of the northern settlement?

This northern Dan became one of Israel's great landmarks. It gave form to the familiar phrase, "From Dan to Beersheba." In this new settlement the Jordan takes its rise. The Jordan is a remarkable river. Rather than a river, it is a water connection between four lakes or inland seas. These four waters are the Source, Lake Merom, Gennesaret, the Dead Sea. The northern Dan extends from the Source to Merom. The fountain where the Jordan begins its course is said to be the largest single source of water in the world. Out of it the Jordan flows, at once a river, forming the eastern boundary of Dan, till it merges its waters with the waters of Merom.

Second.—There is a cunning evinced by individual men of the tribe of Dan. The tribe produced three great men. Their eminence is wrought by cunning—in a good rather than an evil sense. These three heroes represent the tribe in the three

great epochs of its history, each one standing up as if it show how true the tribe ever was to the symbol which Jacob gave.

1. *Aholiab*, the hero of the wilderness, a man of Dan, possessed great skill as a weaver and embroiderer, and was appointed to erect the Tabernacle. There was exquisite work to be done. A cunning workman must be provided. The Lord called Aholiab by name and appointed him to teach exquisite art. "Him hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer in blue, in purple, and in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work." Every curtain that gracefully hung from the pillars of the Tabernacle, every veil that shielded its portals, every festoon of embroidery that beautified the House of God, was a witness to the consummate skill and cunning of Aholiab, the man of Dan.

2. *Hiram*, the architect, was the hero of the tribe in the splendid days of royalty. Hiram is connected with the Temple work. The Temple, the admiration of ages, having a splendor and a glory never surpassed, has rendered illustrious Hiram's name. The noblest contribution which the Tyrian king made to Solomon's Temple was not cedars and fir trees, but Hiram the architect. Let us see just

who this Hiram was. He came from Tyre. His mother was a widow of Naphtali; elsewhere called a daughter of the tribe of Dan. The simple solution of this complicated statement is that she was a woman of Dan, married a Naphtalite, left a widow, and afterwards married a man of Tyre, to whom was born Hiram the architect. By reason of his great natural talents and his acquired skill he was appointed to superintend the execution of all works of art in the erection of the Temple. The masterpieces of his art were the two pillars of cast brass, Jachin and Boaz, which stood on each side the porch in front of the Holy Place. Their dimensions were $32\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, 7 feet diameter, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. Their weight was twenty tons of brass. In the letter of introduction which Hiram the king wrote to Solomon, and which was conveyed by Hiram the architect, are these words: "And now I have sent a cunning man, the son of a woman of the daughter of Dan." That the king had not miscalculated the man nor overestimated his cunning the far-famed glories of Solomon's Temple are an enduring proof.

3. *Samson*, the judge, is the hero of Dan in Israel's iron age. As Aholiab represents the undivided tribe, and Hiram the northern division, so Samson represents the southern Dan, that never migrated from their original inheritance. Samson is the synonym of strength—strength evinced in

cunning. What shall we say of Samson? How shall we estimate so strange a man? How shall we delineate his strange character? His life is a greater puzzle than his own famous riddle propounded at the marriage feast. His birth was announced by angels, yet his career was a wretched failure. He was virtuous, yet vicious; physically strong, yet morally weak. His life is a tragedy, yet a comedy. In some scenes he is absolutely ludicrous; in others sad enough to melt to tears. He was endowed with powers that might have rescued his people from groaning bondage to Philistia. These great powers he fritters away amid feasts and amusements and in ridiculous exploits. But in all these strange and inconsistent features of his life there is one thing that never deserts him—he is cunning always, everywhere. Whether he proposes his riddle, or, losing his bet, provides his wager in a most remarkable manner; whether he is tying the firebrands to the jackals' tails or turning them loose in his enemies' fields, or sporting with the green withes, or carrying off the gates of Gaza, he is cunning in all.

He is cunning in his death. A poor captive, blind, shorn of strength, grinding at the Philistine mill, he is brought out to afford merriment to the Philistine lords in the temple of Dagon on a feast day. Tradition says he uttered the war cry of his tribe: "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

The Bible says that he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell on all the lords, and all the people that were therein. So that they whom he slew at his death were more than they whom he slew in his life. The Scripture says Samson by faith put to flight the aliens.

IV.—TRIBAL DESTINY

The serpent is an ominous symbol. It may suggest wisdom, cunning, skill. But it has other suggestions too; suggestions that are portentous of gloom, sin, ruin, death. In this line of thought the history of Dan is short. Though very brief, it responds very clearly to the symbol's call.

For the sake of worldly ease and affluence, Dan left his early inheritance—an inheritance hard to possess, yet honorable and worthy of the effort to secure. It was in the circle of greatest honor, of noblest tribes, near the Sanctuary, close to Mount Zion. These privileges he held as slight, in view of the ease and affluence to which Jordan's source invited. He gave up a religious inheritance for a worldly portion. A second wrong step became easy by being second. He sets up stolen gods to ornament his home and quiet conscience. The third wrong step easily followed. When Jeroboam revolts and sets up a new kingdom and introduces new worship, he makes two golden calves; sets up

one at Bethel—where shall the other be? Of course at Dan. “The rebel king doubled that sin in Bethel and in Dan, Likening his Maker to the grazed ox.”

Such apostasy bears fruit. The serpent wrought ruin in Eden and war in heaven between Michael and the old Serpent. The serpent is cast out of heaven. For it there is no place. Lo, now behold the sealing of God's chosen ones—144,000. All the tribes are mentioned one by one, but Dan. His name is not there. The apostate tribe—there is no representative of it among the sealed in heaven.

Great privileges, bright prospects, honorable place! But these are despised, rejected, trampled down. Dan turns his back on the Sanctuary of God, ceases to frequent God's house, abandons God's worship, loses his inheritance in the Canaan above. His name was called. He did not answer. Then when he waited, listening for the call, his name was no longer mentioned. He heard no call.

IX

GAD

"Gad, a troop shall overcome him:
But he shall overcome at the last."

—GEN. 49: 19.

GAD is a servant's son. He is the son of Zilpah, Leah's maid. He is full brother of Asher, with whom, however, he is not so much associated as with Reuben. For some reason the oldest son of Leah and the oldest son of Leah's maid are intimately joined. The patriarch's blessing on Gad is very brief. But there is in its few words a very full alliteration, which in the English version does not appear. In the Hebrew verse there are just six words. In these six words "Gad" occurs four times. Gad means troop. To preserve somewhat the repetition of the original, the verse may be rudely rendered: "Troop, a troop shall out-troop him; but he shall out-troop at the last."

I.—THE SYMBOL OF GAD

By this remarkable repetition of the word the symbol is thrust upon our notice. A troop is the symbol of the tribe of Gad. Not a company of

disciplined soldiers, well drilled, well commanded, engaged in regular warfare, and fighting according to well-approved tactics; but Gad is a marauding, plundering band. Gather together such a band of men, with hearts brave as the bravest, unknown to fear, with hands ready for deeds of daring, exhilarated rather than depressed by impending dangers, reckless of life, true friends, bitter foes—this is the sort of troop that represents the tribe of Gad. Gad is in some features like the chivalric knight of the Middle Ages, who, placing his sword upon the altar, swears to maintain right against might, and never by word or deed to stain his character as knight or Christian. The weak point with this troop of Gad is that, with all his nobility, heroism, chivalry, and valor, there is with the man of Gad a certain wildness and irregularity which justify the designation of his troop as a plundering and marauding band. There is muscle enough, and courage enough, for any exploit; but there is wanting a cool, deliberate judgment which wisely directs exploits, conducts them to successful issue, and makes them subserve the general good. We see the valorous troop, swift as the roe upon the mountain, speed out of sight. One thing we know; we shall hear of them again in deeds of daring and exploit. One thing we do not know; whether the heroic deed shall be for good or ill, for weal or woe.

The meaning of the symbol is readily traced: Valor, severely tried, triumphant in the end. Hence we may thus express the subject of this study—Gad, the valorous tribe. Dan was noted for craft, cunning, artifice. Gad is famous for valor; open, outright, reckless. So sharp a contrast is there between these men. The character of the tribe of Gad is very fully delineated and very clearly drawn throughout their whole career. None of the tribes have their tribal features more faithfully and vividly portrayed than Gad, the trooper.

II.—THE LAND OF GAD

In the light of this symbol look at the land of Gad. The character of his inheritance is in closest keeping with the trooper. It perfectly suits his needs, and develops his propensity. The Valley of Jezreel, which Issachar found so pleasant to his sight and so delightful as a home, would never have suited this marauding tribe. Shephelah, where Dan might well have been pleased to dwell, would have had slight charms for the troopers of the tribe of Gad. What Gad needs is a place where he may practice predatory warfare—wild, reckless, brave. He received the famous land of Gilead. Let us note its features.

1. *Location of Gilead.*—Gilead lies east of Jordan. It is not properly within the land of Canaan.

Canaan is properly the country between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. If from the source of the Jordan to the southern limit of the Dead Sea east of Jordan we divide the country into three nearly equal sections by lines running east and west, the southern section will be Moab, the northern Bashan, the middle Gilead. Moab is Reuben's home. Bashan is the home of half Manasseh. Gilead is the home of Gad. It is the country east of Jordan, extending from the southern limit of Gennesaret to the northern limit of the Dead Sea. It extends eastward some twenty-five miles, the eastern border being not sharply defined. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?"

2. *The Reason of Gad's Settlement There.*—Reuben and Gad, half-brothers, seem to have been drawn into very close alliance and to have been somewhat alike in their pursuits. Looking down on the great encampment of Israel, we find Gad not in the same camp with Asher, his whole brother, but on the opposite side of the Sanctuary in the camp of Reuben. Between these two tribes there is a remarkable coincidence of numbers. They are nearer the same size than any other two tribes of Israel. Reuben, 46,500; Gad, 45,650. Another coincidence is oneness of pursuit. Theirs was the same occupation. Of all the sons of Jacob these two tribes alone returned to the land which

their forefathers had left years before, with their occupations unchanged. When from Canaan Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt, they said to Pharaoh: "Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle: thy servants are shepherds." They were herdsmen and shepherds. Contact with Egypt, with its civilization, its persecutions and its varied influences, had wrought a great change in the tribes. Many years have passed. The mighty host of Israel's sons camp on the borders of Canaan. Of them all Reuben and Gad alone have adhered to pastoral pursuits and preserved the habits of their race. All through the wilderness they brought their cattle; the lowing of their herds and the bleating of their flocks were the music of their march.

The host of Israel is now camped on the heights of Moab overlooking Jordan, preparing to cross the river. A committee of men wait on Moses. They have a petition to offer. "This land of Gilead is a land for cattle. Thy servants, the men of Reuben and Gad, have much cattle. If we have found grace in thy sight, let us settle here. Bring us not over Jordan." At first Moses rebuked them sharply, as if they wished to escape the toils and perils of conquest. But they soon set themselves right before him, by promising that they would leave their families and cattle and flocks in their new homes, and themselves go over in front of the other tribes, fight for them and with them, till their

land should be subdued. In this offer we trace the heroic valor of the trooper Gad. Moses agreed. Gad settled in Gilead. How faithfully he performed his part of the engagement history fully testifies. The conquest being ended, Joshua said of them: "The Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren; now therefore get you to your tents on the other side of Jordan." To their tents they came; to the dangers and delights of the free Bedouin life in which they had chosen to remain, and of which their subsequent history affords such charming glimpses.

3. *The Features of Gilead.*—The troopers are now at home, in the land of their choice, the lot of their inheritance. Gilead is theirs. Let us see what sort of country Gilead is. It is large, spacious, ample; not like the small sections into which the country west of Jordan mostly was divided; not hemmed in by sharply defined boundaries not to be transgressed. Strictly limited by Jordan on the west, by Manasseh on the north, and by Reuben on the south, the east gave no landmark to forbid their predatory expeditions. Theirs is a country in which they can freely breathe and largely roam, and from which these troopers can go on plundering missions without treading on their brothers' rights.

The land of Gilead possessed two physical features. There was the valley on the east of Jordan, a narrow, lovely plain by the river-side, a narrow

strip of lowland from Gennesaret to the Dead Sea. Then there was a precipitate mountain-side, from the valley a thousand feet, a steep ascent. By this we reach the tableland of Gilead, seemingly tossed about in wild confusion—a sea of verdure. Not flat, nor tame, but rolling as if the billows of the sea by a sudden fiat of Omnipotence had been stayed. Noble trees of varied forest growth abound—a gorgeous park diversified and beautified by alternation of graceful hill, fertile vale, and luxuriant herbage. What needs a trooper more than that? He needs not to till the soil. He needs not to build a permanent abode. He can follow his cattle and flocks. While they graze and are tended, he can indulge his wildest fancy and most chimerical design. Hence, we find that few cities dot this portion of the map. It is richer than Bashan; yet, while Bashan's hills are crowded with a multitude of cities, Gilead is a noble park of primeval growth, where cattle graze and flocks gambol and troopers wildly roam; but where cities rarely grow and permanent abodes are not so often seen. Gadite and Gileadite become interchangeable names.

III.—THE NEIGHBORS OF GAD

In the light of this symbol let us look at Gad's neighbors. A frontier people must adjust their methods, offensive and defensive, to the tactics of

their nearest and mightiest foes. Gad is a frontier tribe. His eastern borders verge on the heathen hordes. There is nothing between him and the great outside world, not even a natural boundary line. The Ammonites are his neighbors and his foes. The Moabites and Ammonites were descended from Lot. The Moabites, over against Reuben, were perhaps the most civilized of all the nations with whom in their settlement Israel had anything to do. From them came the lovely Ruth, the Moabite maiden. But the Ammonites, over against Gad, were the wildest, most cruel, most lawless, most uncivilized of all Israel's foes. When we read of Moab, we read of the plentiful fields, the hay, the summer fruits, the vineyards, the wine presses, the songs of the harvesters. But in relation to the Ammonites, we find constant traces of fierce marauders in their wild and reckless excursions.

Who is it that wishes to thrust out the right eyes of all the citizens of Jabesh Gilead? The Ammonite. Who takes the premium for the highest degree of crafty cruelty to foes and friends? The Ammonite. While Moab had its streets, its housetops, its high places, and its various towers, Ammon can point to but one city in all its borders, and that a fortress, the fortress Rabbah.

The religion of the Ammonites, if religion it can be termed, points to the same wild and unculti-

vated character. Their deity was worshiped not in a house or on a high place, but in a booth, a temporary bower; as if their god, like themselves, was nomadic, wild, and roaming.

Such was Gad's nearest neighbor, a very troublesome neighbor, as history proves. The method of his attacks on Gad, by marauding bands, by plundering, reckless troopers, tended to develop this predilection of the trooping tribe. By Ammon Gad was often overcome; but in the end Gad bore his standard in triumph, and trampled down these bitter foes. Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at last. In Gad and Ammon the wild troopers meet. For a while destiny wavers in the balance; but true to the prophetic words of Jacob, the sons of Israel triumph in the end.

IV.—THE MEN OF GAD

In the light of the symbol let us trace the heroes of the tribe of Gad. The southron is a southron everywhere; is ever marked by the peculiarities of the land of his birth, residence, and love. The western man is not less distinctly marked. New England's sons wear their badge of nativity and life. As clearly marked from all others were these men of Gad. We have an inspired delineation of their character. It seems to have been written in the reflected light of Gad's symbol. Here it is:

“Strong men of might, men of war for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, their faces the faces of lions, and like roes upon the mountains for swiftness.” Briefly expressed—a troop. Naturally enough their heroes are somewhat numerous. Let us recall some of them, and with them note their symbol.

1. *Jephthah*.—Jephthah is the chivalric judge of Israel, and freebooter of the tribe of Gad. He is driven from home by a family feud. He loses not his tribal trait by absence, but becomes a wild trooper in the land of Job. Gilead is smarting under the oppression of the Ammonites. Jephthah adopted a kind of life that was unrestrained, adventurous, and insecure, like that of a Scottish chieftain in the Middle Ages. His fame, as a bold, successful plunderer, comes back to his native Gilead. He is the man of all others Gilead needs. The time being ripe to throw off the Ammonitish yoke, the elders of Gilead invite Jephthah home and offer him command. Will he come, he who was driven away? On one condition he accepts the call. If successful, he shall be head over all his tribe, ruler of Gad, prince of Gilead. To this condition they accede. Jephthah comes. Once driven off, he is now invited back, and welcomed too! He comes back home, assumes command, and opens correspondence with the king of Ammon. War begins; battle brews. The armies

approach each other. Ere the conflict is joined this wild trooper makes a rash and reckless vow. There is a religious vein in his wild nature. Under rough exterior beats a heart in which sacred emotions play. Hear Jephthah's vow: "Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be Jehovah's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

Israel's standard advances against the foes. The troopers' deadly blows are dealt with telling power. Ammon is checked, is driven, is put to flight. Gad has overcome at the last. The conqueror turns homeward. his face to Mizpah, where all that is dearest to him dwells. Perhaps for the moment he is unmindful of his vow; not unmindful to remain. See! There come to meet him and greet him a joyous procession of damsels with dances and timbrels. Among them his daughter, his only child. It is to make his homecoming happy. "Alas! my daughter, thou hast brought me very low. I have opened my mouth to Jehovah, and I cannot go back." "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto Jehovah, do to me according to the word which hath proceeded out of thy mouth." "And he offered her a burnt offering." Jephthah, the rude Gileadite, brave his heart, rash his vow, his spirit hardened by his previous life as a freebooter and plunderer, lays his daughter, lovely,

virtuous, brave, his only child, a sacrificial victim on the altar. Surely those were rude times, and a wild people. If Jephthah thought that he was right, then we have here a notable instance of adherence to right, even when it rends the heart. Here at least we have wild romance in real life. It well befits the tribe whose symbol is a reckless trooper.

2. *The Men of Jabesh*.—Rough natures are often blessed with warm, loving, grateful hearts. The trooper whose name strikes terror to the foe often proves himself to be the truest and most grateful friend. Jabesh, a city of Gad, is besieged by the Ammonites. Closely invested, it is called to surrender. No terms of mercy are allowed. A respite of seven days is secured, by which it would seem death only stares them the longer in the face. Messengers are, however, sent to King Saul. It is the morning of the seventh day of truce, the last. Saul with his great army comes in sight and, falling on the unsuspecting Ammonites, puts them to flight. Jabesh is free. The men of Jabesh never forget this favor. The troopers treasured the grateful memory of Saul's kind act.

Saul's checkered life is drawing to its close. The star of his destiny is dipping in the western sky. His friends are now few. His forces are marshaled on Gilboa. He prepares for his last battle. The din of strife is heard. The cloud of conflict is seen. When the cloud has rolled away and

silence reigns again over Israel, Israel's cause is lost, their standard has fallen, their king is slain. Now see what the Philistines do. They cut Saul's head from his body. They nail his headless corpse on the wall of Bethshean in the Valley of Jezreel. Is there no one to resent such indignity to Israel's king? Where are the brave men of Israel who would rather die than see their monarch's body thus disgraced? They have fled. They have left their king to his impending fate. Hark! what sound is this? Be still and listen. Is it the rushing of the Jordan's stream? Is it the gurgling waters of Bethshean's brook? It is the sound of human footsteps. Quietly as possible they come, lest the rustling of the leaves attract the notice of Philistine sentinels that walk their rounds or guard their appointed posts.

From Gilead's heights the men of Jabesh have seen the body of their deliverer Saul nailed in disgrace to Bethshean's wall. Down come the fearless troopers from the heights, cross the flowing Jordan, creep up Jezreel's vale, and, with no thought of life or peril, amid the Philistine host, remove the body of the king, carry it to Jabesh in the land of Gad. They burn it there, and with honor inter the ashes of the fallen Saul. All honor to the daring, true nobility, the high sense of duty, right, and gratitude of the rough, warlike men of God.

3. *Helpers of Helpless.*—A friend to the friend-

less heroic Gad seems always to be. His warlike weapons are often drawn on the side of the weak. Rough natures often reveal that honorable trait. When we wish comfort, support, friendship, we do not always find these blessings coming from those of smoothest speech, most pleasing manner, or most graceful address. Oftener perhaps such blessings come from those who outwardly are uncouth, rough, and seemingly inconsiderate and unsympathetic. So it was with Gad. The land of Gad was the refuge for the oppressed. The weary might go there for rest; the pursued might find there a safe retreat.

Ishbosheth finds a welcome there. When Saul died, David began his reign. Ishbosheth, Saul's oldest surviving son, assumed the royal title and proclaimed himself the king. Where should the waning house of Saul look for support sooner than to the tribe of Gad? Thither Ishbosheth went. There he established his throne. Nowhere else in all the kingdom could he have received so warm a welcome as from these men of Gilead who sympathized with the afflicted and distressed. They took Ishbosheth's part against David, in the day of David's power.

David had his day of sorrow too. To him there came a day of flight, of exile from his palace and from his throne. Absalom rebels. The king's life is imperiled. He must leave his palace at once. He must go forth without delay. Absalom has

stolen the hearts of his people. There was one tribe whose hearts he could not steal—the fearless, warm-hearted, faithful troopers of Gad. Now that David is in trouble, these friends of the friendless open to him their arms and welcome him to their retreat.

David, almost alone, with a few faithful followers, by instinct turns to the men who never played false because of peril, crosses the brow of Olivet, goes down to Jordan and crosses by the ferry. As he goes, stones and curses fall from unfriendly hands and lips around him; but once across the Jordan in Gilead he is safe. The noble Barzillai, the Gileadite, into whose coffers God had poured abundant wealth, opens his treasures and supplies all needed comforts to the banished king. Absalom's army sweeps victoriously over the land till it comes to Gilead. There, in the land of brave troopers and faithful friends, the traitor army is brought to a stand and put to flight. There Absalom, the traitor son, is slain.

The grateful king said to Barzillai: "Come thou over with me. I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem." Barzillai answered: "Why should the king recompense it me with such reward? Let thy servant turn back and die in my own city." And David kissed Barzillai and blessed him. David went back to his throne and palace. Barzillai from the parting place on the borders of Gad returned to his home amid the wild scenes of Gilead.

4. *Elijah*.—The grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced was a man of Gad. In him the character of the tribe was most fully developed. He was the Gadite in heroic size, made great to be seen afar, to loom over all the land and down all the ages. He was of more than ordinary size; so the impression prevails and the inference is made. His hair was long and thick and hung in shaggy locks down on his shoulders. His raiment was a girdle of skin around his body. A mantle of renown fell over his shoulders. The prophet of fire he was, at whose presence kings trembled; at whose command royal Ahab promptly obeyed. Elijah the Tishbite! Why the Tishbite, nobody knows. One thing of him we know. In him we see all the fire and heroism and valor of Gad subdued and controlled by grace and sanctified by heavenly consecration. Had he not been a great prophet what a warrior he would have been! What a warrior he was!

He hailed from Gilead, where shepherds looked down three thousand feet into the vale of Jordan; from Gilead, where the heights are crowned with robber strongholds and the valleys are whitened with pasturing flocks; from Gilead, where shepherds and herdsmen watch in the fields armed to the teeth lest predatory bands should fall upon them and find them unprepared.

In Elijah we see the wild Gadite sanctified, the

Bedouin Israelite consecrated to his God. Suddenly the trooper-prophet comes upon the stage, his coming unannounced. He trembles not in the presence of the earthly crowned. For three years he hides himself amid the crags of Gilead. He runs before the royal chariot at the bursting of Carmel's storm, and wearies not. When his eventful life is over, fleetier than the roe upon the mountain, he mounts the chariot of fire and is borne upward by a whirlwind to his heavenly home. A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.

X

ASHER

“Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,
And he shall yield royal dainties.”

—GEN. 49: 20.

ASHER is Zilpah's son. He is whole brother of Gad. The order of the names is somewhat peculiar. We have first of all Leah's sons. Last of all come Rachel's sons. The servants' sons come between these, but in peculiar order. Bilhah's are first and last; between them Gad and Asher, Zilpah's sons. Asher and his tribe are the least mentioned of all the host of Israel. Like the tribe of Simeon, in all the annals of Asher there is but one conspicuous figure, one distinguished name. The casual notices of Asher, however, fall into line with Jacob's brief blessing on this undistinguished son.

I.—ASHER'S TRIBAL SYMBOL

“Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.” His bread shall be fat. “Bread” is the symbol of the tribe. What kind of

bread? There are several kinds of bread mentioned in Scripture. There are the "barley loaves" which the lad furnished for the Saviour's miracle; used by the poorest people or in times of unusual scarcity. Hence, the barley loaf would represent what was mean or insignificant. There is the rye loaf also. Elijah in the wilderness sleeps under the juniper tree. An angel touches him, saying: "Rise and eat." There before him is a cake baked on the coals; a loaf of rye bread, rough food of the wilderness. Then there is the wheat loaf. This was regarded best. This was the fare of the regal and the rich. Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour. Not the quantity only, but the quality also is emphasized. There is one verse of Isaiah which brings these bread grains into one view and into their proper relations. Isaiah 28:25: "Doth not the plowman cast in the wheat in the principal place, and the barley in the appointed place, and the rye in the borders of the fields?"

Which of these three kinds of bread becomes the symbol of Asher and his tribe? Jacob answers for us. "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." His loaf shall be the best. It shall be good enough to please the king—a royal dainty. In all the delicacies which with luxurious abundance loaded the tables of King Solomon, there was nothing better than the royal

bread of Asher. The symbol is not simply bread, but the finest and the best; dainties for the king.

Bread signifies sustenance. It is the staff of life. It is the nourisher of the body. Royal dainties suggest luxurious living. Asher is the dainty tribe, fond of luxuries and given to ease. The royal loaf represents the tribe.

II.—ASHER'S INHERITANCE

There is no other country in all the world into which are crowded so many great events, and to which attach so important associations, as the Holy Land; not even Greece, the land of poetry, eloquence, art, and song. It is a little land, but it is written all over with greatest truths and immortalized with thrilling scenes. This is reason enough for tracing its physical features and desiring to know somewhat of sacred geography. It is well that Bible students seek to trace its mountains and valleys, to know its cities and rivers, to mark its bulwarks, and learn its great boundary lines. The Bible is written on the land of its charming scenes and thrilling events. Another reason for this study of the land is that a people must ever more and more become adjusted to their home; and the home become more and more expressive of the people. Each has of the other a story to tell, a revelation to make. Asher's inheritance suits the royal loaf.

Asher's inheritance is the extreme northwestern portion of the land. It borders on the sea. The Mediterranean Sea washes 140 miles of Canaan's coast. Along this shore stretches one great plain. This plain gently rises eastward to the mountain range that constitutes the central feature of the land. By certain natural features this maritime plain is divided into three sections. Each section receives a special name. The southernmost is Shephelah or Lowland. This reaches almost to Joppa. Here Shephelah is suddenly narrowed by an inroad of the hills. The narrowed plain is Sharon, a name familiar in sacred classics. Sharon finds its northern limit at the base of Mount Carmel, which, jutting out from the hill country, stands squarely across the seaboard plain. There is a broad sandy beach that circles around the mountain base. We pass around between the mountain and the sea. When we complete the semicircle and stand on the northern side of Carmel, we look forward, and before us stretching northward is the third section of the maritime plain. This is the plain of Acre, Asher's peaceful home.

The northern limit of this plain of Acre is signalized by a remarkable and renowned natural phenomenon. It is called the Tyrian Ladder. It is a promontory that juts out boldly into the sea. It invades the plain, cuts it absolutely off, stands out in the sea, leaving not even a sandy beach about

its base. There is no passage-way around the mountain base. The Tyrian Ladder stands as the well-defined limit between Phenicia on the north and Israel on the south. These two mountains, Carmel and the Tyrian Ladder, are the great landmarks of Asher. Asher looks south—there is Carmel. He looks north—there is the spur of Lebanon. These two great pillars mark the limits of his home. The last, by its frowning height and forbidding sides, seems to be God's sentinel ever-watchful and ever-warning this ease-loving and most northern tribe against alliance with Phenicia, the enemies of Israel's God. Well would it have been for Asher had an earnest heed been given to this silent but impressive lesson.

Between these sentinel mountains and between the mountains of Naphtali and the blue waters of the sea the men of Asher dwelt. It was a fertile plain, whose rich soil was ready with great abundance to reward Asher's toiling sons. Like the Valley of Jezreel, a garden spot of Canaan was this plain of Acre, a choice inheritance. It was emphatically a grain country. Its harvests were enormous.

Gad and Asher were whole brothers. They were far removed from each other in settlement. Still farther, however, they were removed in tastes, habits, and pursuits. Gad was wild and roaming, adventurous and bold; Asher was domestic. He loved his home and delighted in his affluence and

ease. His plain was rich, his soil well tilled, his harvests large, his dainties such as might please a king. The royal loaf may well symbolize the plain where the sea breezes fan the fields of golden grain, where the abundant harvests richly reward the plowmen and reapers, where barns are filled and granaries are amply stored, and ease and affluence are enjoyed.

III.—ASHER'S BLESSINGS

The inheritance was a blessing. But there were certain specific blessings which such an inheritance gave. There is an unusual particularity in the mention of the blessings which Asher inherits. There is pictured for him almost everything that heart could desire, all that would make life comfortable and agreeable. Asher means happy. If he lived up to his privilege, his name and symbol, we might announce our subject as "Asher, or the Happy Tribe." Surely his portion was well fitted to make a happy tribe. Turning to Moses's blessing we find the following items of Asher's happy inheritance:

I. *A Large Tribe*.—"Let Asher be blessed with children." Children were regarded as blessings in those days. The larger the family, the more happiness crowned the home. Asher was one of the largest tribes. At the time of settlement the tribe numbered 53,400 men: During the forty years of

wandering Asher had grown in numbers. The blessing of numbers certainly was his.

2. *The Amiable Tribe*.—Asher had the affection of his brethren. Here is something quite novel in the course of these blessings. Brotherly love is specified. Moses says: "Let Asher be acceptable to his brethren." What shall we infer from this? What need was there of this mention? Putting things together, we discern a feature of this tribe standing out in bold relief. Asher is a peace-loving, ease-loving, domestic tribe. That is one fact. Another fact: Moses speaks of Asher's acceptability to his brethren. Combining these facts, we may infer that Asher possessed the happy faculty of rendering himself agreeable to others; the happy faculty of adaptability—the amiable tribe. This falls in beautifully with a fact concerning the great encampment of Israel's host. A problem: Given the tribes, related as we have found them to be in their domestic infelicities, the problem is to form four camps of three tribes each, yet not to bring into any one camp heterogeneous elements. It is not an easy problem. The nearest approach to a perfect solution seems to be that which we find in Israel's camp. Camp No. 1. All Leah's sons; homogeneous. Camp No. 2. All Rachel's sons; homogeneous. Camp No. 3. Two tribes of Leah's sons and one of Leah's maid's; homogeneous. Camp No. 4. Two tribes of Bilhah's sons and

one of Zilpah's; heterogeneous, two antagonistic elements. So we think, until we learn that the lonely tribe is Asher, whom his brethren loved, the tribe whose amiability secured his acceptance everywhere.

3. *A Wealthy Tribe*.—"Let him dip his foot in oil and his shoes be iron and brass." Asher's granaries were filled with precious treasures gathered from the cultivated fields. His hillsides were adorned with groves of dusky olives. The olive oil is stored or shipped, used at home or sent abroad. His shoes are iron and brass. His also is mineral wealth. Amid the roots of Lebanon, which encroached on Asher's eastern borders, were copper and iron. The iron which at this day is worked there is said to be peculiarly suitable for shoeing beasts of burden, and is eagerly sought for in Phenicia and northern Syria.

Isaiah works up this feature into a pen picture. He gives us a glimpse of the interior of one of Asher's forges: "The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with the hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water and is faint." See the artisan, parched with the heat and begrimed with the smoke of the furnace, standing by his anvil contemplating the unwrought iron; his ears deafened with the din of heavy hammer, his eyes fixed on his model and

his work, resting not till the work is done. This is the reproduction of many a scene in ancient Asher.

What portion of the earthly inheritance is rough, difficult, wearing, hard, provides at the same time that by which we may safely tread the rudest way and climb the most difficult ascent. The mountains that encroach on Asher's pleasant plain and interrupt his easy ways furnish that by which his feet are shod to tread the roughened way.

4. *A Guarded Tribe*.—Not only the guardian mountains keep watch over Asher, another guard has he. His guard is a noted promise of the Lord. The culmination of Asher's blessings is in the promise of future good. One of the sweetest promises of God's word first fell on Asher's ears. It has been the comfort of many children of God from that day to this. It has helped the toiler to do his work. It has cheered the heavy-laden to bear his burden. It has helped the careworn to drive away his care. It has brought light into many shadowed hearts. It has upheld many who without it would have fallen by the way. The promise, while it is ours to-day, has come to us through Asher's tribe. Do you ask what this promise is? "As thy days so shall thy strength be." After all, this is the richest jewel in Asher's crown of blessings. This is his Koh-i-noor. As thy days thy strength shall be! It puts within his

grasp all future prosperity! Makes it a possibility to him.

What does this promise mean? Clearly not that as thy days are multiplied thy strength shall be increased. It does not mean that each revolving year, without condition, shall add to Asher's strength. But doubtless it means that the days and the strength shall go along together and alike. As thy days are improved thy strength shall be improved. If the one is good, the other shall be good. If the one fails, the other shall fail. The day is a picture of the strength. Fear nothing, as your life is right. Let your days be rightly lived and you shall be adequate to every emergency, equal to every demand. Phenicians are near you. You are a border tribe. Attend only to your day. Be ready for it when it comes. Let it be wisely used. All will be well. As thy days so shall thy strength be. We are troubled oft about our strength. God attends to that. We should attend only to the day. How have we lived to-day?

IV.—ASHER'S RECORD

The history of Asher is very brief and bare of incident. But in its brevity we readily trace the unfolding of the character Jacob marked and Moses reaffirmed. His bread was fat; his heart became dull. His fare was dainty, delicate, and royal; he

became effeminate. Wealth rolled in on Asher; wealth brought its enervating luxuries. His days were evil; his strength soon waned and was exhausted. A beautiful beginning his surely was; one condition to success—serve God and obey his commands. A sad and wretched end was his; apostasy from God. The two sentinel mountains are still there, as when they guarded Asher's tribe. There are olive trees still yielding olives and fields still yielding grain. Amid that scene the tribe which might have been the happy tribe of Israel became the most inferior tribe of Israel's host.

No page of history is brightened by heroic deeds of Asher's tribe. The little plain of Acre has a distinguished record in the history of the world's affairs; but its glories were not achieved by Asher's men. Great armies have camped upon it. Valiant deeds have immortalized its name. There the armies of Europe, Asia, and Africa from time to time have met in fearful conflict. There Bedouin, Saladin, Richard the Lion-hearted, Khalil, Napoleon, Ibrahim Pasha, and Napier have laid siege or have been besieged. There were cooped up the remnants of the great crusading armies, driven from every other part of Palestine, still holding this the key of Canaan. It was not till they were driven thence that, as Gibbon says, "a mournful and solitary silence prevailed along the coast which had so long resounded with the world's debate."

Heroes from the four quarters of the world have achieved renown on Asher's plain, while Asher sinks into insignificance and we search his lists in vain for one distinguished name. What Reuben was east of Jordan, what Simeon was in the south, Asher is in the north—the insignificant tribe. His history is a great negation. We read not what he did, but what he failed to do. There are four historic references to Asher. They are brief. We touch them merely. Glance at them hurriedly, and let them go.

1. "Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor Zidon, nor Ahlab, nor Achzib, nor Helbah, nor Aphik, nor Rehob." Then whom did he drive out? We are at a loss to know. It seems he did not drive out any. The words are added: "But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites: for they did not drive them out." The record here about Asher is different from the record of any other tribe. Some other tribes did not succeed in taking all their allotted cities. But of them it is added: "The Canaanites dwelt with them." The Canaanites were in the minority, or at least were tributary to these tribes. But of Asher it is said: He lived with the Canaanites, because he did not drive them out. He lived with them, made alliances with them, and forfeited his claim to the richest jewel in his crown of blessing; and his strength began to wane.

2. Deborah, Israel's heroic poetess, sings her joyous song of victory. Jabin is defeated and Sisera is slain. On Israel's standard triumph perched, under the leadership of Barak and Deborah. There had been a call to arms. The trumpet had sounded over the hills of Zebulun and Naphtali, over the plains of Issachar and Asher. But Asher, the luxurious tribe of Israel, though he heard the battle call, continued on the seashore and abode on his creeks. Of all the tribe there was not a man who was willing to draw his sword for Jehovah or help to put to flight Jehovah's foes. His days were evil; rapidly ebbs his strength away.

3. David makes a record of the princes over the tribes of Israel. There is no prince of Asher named. His days had more evil grown; his strength was so far gone as to be uncounted when the princes' names were called.

4. A thousand years have passed since no prince of Asher could be found to represent his tribe. Great events have transpired. Kingdoms have arisen and fallen. Terrible convulsions have shaken the land and the people from the monarchs to the humblest peasants of the realm. But never once catch we the sound of Asher's name nor see the record of his deed. The thousand years have passed. Once more, once only, to the surface Asher comes. It is as the flickering of the spark

that flares up and then goes out into perpetual darkness. It is the last name in Asher's history. It is the only name that reflects any honor on the tribe. It is the only one who is recorded as having broken the spell of worldliness that cursed the tribe. It is the only one in whom the amiability and acceptability of Asher are preserved. The only one in whose life the symbol shines in its best light and yields its best meaning.

The scene is in Jerusalem. Herod's temple stands in all its splendor. A happy little family enter the court. The careless crowd jostles them and hurries by. Who are they more than others? A man, a woman, and a lovely Baby, that is all. There is no halo round them. There is no outward badge of high estate, or unusual dignity, or uncommon claim. An aged woman sees them—Anna, a widow, a prophetess, of the tribe of Asher. Far from the tribal home in the distant north, weary of worldliness, she has taken up her abode in Jehovah's house. She prays and longs and sighs for the day of Israel's redemption. Fixing intently her gaze on the infant Jesus, her spirit rejoices, and she gives thanks to the Lord, and speaks of Him to all that looked for redemption in Israel.

The fires of prophecy which died out in Malachi are kindled anew in the heart of Anna, the aged prophetess of Asher's tribe. The promise that had lain buried more than a thousand years was not

lifeless, but instinct with unabated life: As thy days thy strength shall be. The vitality of God's Word is eternal. The jewels of His promise may be cast down, trampled, lost to sight, but they are jewels still, awaiting the discovery of faith. When from their oblivion they are drawn, they glow with heavenly light, undimmed by neglect, unimpaired by forgetfulness of man.

Asher forgot God, the giver of his daily bread. The aged Anna finds that what the promise needs is a believing heart to receive the blessing which it gives. She who was of the tribe whose symbol was the body's bread is the first in the dawning of the better day to welcome Him who proclaimed Himself as the Bread of Life.

XI

NAPHTALI

"Naphtali is a hind let loose:
He giveth goodly words."

—GEN. 49: 21.

THIS blessing pronounced on Naphtali has been subjected to varied criticism. Several translations have been suggested as preferable to the one contained in our English version. One critic suggests: "Naphtali is a spreading oak of beautiful branches." Another: "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he putteth forth spreading antlers." The difficulty in accepting any of these suggestions is that each of them necessitates some slight change in the original Hebrew words. Such arbitrary changes, made only to support a fancy, are not to be approved. The original words are simply, easily, correctly translated as we have them in our English Bible. The reason for suggesting different renderings seems to be what is regarded as an incongruity between the two clauses of the blessing: "a hind let loose" and "giveth goodly words." This seeming incongruity may vanish as we pursue the study of this tribe.

I.—NAPHTALI'S SYMBOL

The symbol is a hind let loose; a graceful hind, a female deer. There are two principal sorts of deer; the fallow deer, best known to us, seen in our forests, whose fawn is sometimes seen about our parks and lawns; and the red deer or stag, the hart and hind. The Bible is not a treatise on natural history, and may not always draw a fine line between the different species of the same great family of creatures. Hence some think there is reference here to the beautiful gazelle of graceful form and agile motion. There are frequent allusions to deer in Scripture. So far as these allusions are poetical the reference is always to the hind or female deer. In the prophetic song of Habakkuk: "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." In the beautiful and familiar lyrical poem of royal David: "As the hart [hind is the proper translation here] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

The hind is a beautiful animal, trim, symmetrical, graceful. Its slender limbs are made for rapid motion; so fleet that its feet seem to scorn to touch the earth in its rapid flight. Its celerity has become a proverb. Tradition has it that Naphtali was celebrated for swiftness. The hind is shy and shuns the abode of man. It is wild and timid until com-

pelled to stand at bay; then fearful in the vengeance which it executes. It will startle at the rustling of the forest leaves; yet when attacked, and escape is cut off, the timid hind with reckless courage will defy its foe. It may become a victim to superior might, but not as the lamb, that bleats and bleeds and dies.

Its home is in the mountains. In Israel's land the graceful deer and fleet-footed gazelle sport, graze, and roam in the highlands of Palestine. The hind imprisoned chafes, pines, and droops. Let it loose, and watch it. The hind let loose stands a moment, lifts its graceful neck, pricks up its ears, distends its nostrils, as if to descry the mountain brow or catch the odors of the mountain air; then on fleet hoofs hies to the distant hills and finds the long-desired home of its love amid rugged crags, rifted rocks, narrow defiles, and deep gorges. It will not rest and is not satisfied until it proudly stands on dizzy heights where the huntsmen, bold mountaineer though he be, will scarcely dare to follow. Naphtali is a hind let loose.

The significance of this symbol is not difficult to trace. It suggests Naphtali the mountaineers of Israel, the highlanders of Canaan. The symbolic meaning may be traced in Naphtali's home, Naphtali's blessings, and Naphtali's character.

II.—NAPHTALI'S HOME

See the tribe at Shiloh, in Israel's great encampment there. The land is not completely apportioned yet. Tribe by tribe has drawn its lot and received its inheritance. Two tribes at length are left to be provided for, Naphtali and Dan. The restless hinds have long been subjected to the rigors of imprisonment. Egyptian bondage had pressed heavily upon them. Scarcely less had the trials of forty years of wandering fretted their wild, untamable natures. While other tribes had grown amid desert sands and protracted wanderings, Naphtali had drooped and dwindled, as from its constrained life the tribe had sighed for the freedom of its home. The day of release at last had come. The lot is drawn. The inheritance is announced. The hind let loose speeds to the mountain home.

Let us trace the location of the tribe. Of all the inheritances Naphtali's is northernmost. It is immediately east of Asher and west of northern Dan. It reaches farther north than either. The three longitudinal features of the land are the maritime plain, the central mountain range, and the Jordan gorge. The seaboard plain attains its northern limit in Asher's home. The Jordan valley in its northern limit marks Dan's abode. The northern limit of the mountain range is the inheritance of

Naphtali. The central mountain ridge, rising amid the southern plains of Judah, gradually ascends, gradually assumes more rugged features, until it culminates in the north amid the wildness and sublimity which mark the inheritance of Naphtali.

Three physical features constitute the beauty and the grandeur of the scene—mountain, valley, and water. These three features, so essential to completeness of landscape beauty, are not always found combined. But in the little state of Naphtali, ten by thirty miles, we find them in the glory of perfection. It is the Switzerland of Canaan.

Two mountain ranges, Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, with numerous spurs, display their glories to the Naphtalites, and upon these sons of Israel shed their choicest blessings. The mountain sides are in many places precipitous, rugged, and deeply furrowed. These natural incisions form shadowed ravines, which add striking features to the picturesque and sublimity of the scene.

Here and there amid the dizzy heights are plots of cultivated land, so far above the usual plain of human habitation, so difficult of access, so uninviting for the purposes of home, that the presence of human dwellings in these lofty reaches of the land creates surprise. But the hinds let loose have climbed the rocky sides and delight to rest on the airy heights.

There, too, without a rival in all the land, the

one great landmark of all Canaan rises giant amid giants—Hermon, the glory of the land. It towers ten thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea. Its sides are clothed with verdure, forest growth, and graceful vine. Its three peaks are forever robed in peerless white. On its summit perpetual snow holds its wintry sway. It was here, on the mighty Hermon, the culminating height of Naphtali's mountains, that the transfigured glory of our Lord was revealed to the favored three.

Imagine the experience of the traveler who seeks to scale these mountains, to trace their ill-defined and rugged paths, allured on by exhilarating mountain air and by the fragrance of the mountain flowers and cedar groves, thrilled by the thoughts that throng his brain and the visions that charm his eyes. He carefully makes his way along the perilous path, the dizzy height on one side and the abysmal depth on the other side, and the narrow path between. Even a son of Naphtali must for a moment hold his breath and closely cling to the mountain-side. Amid these mountain wilds to-day are seen graceful hinds, that by their presence afford a favorable comment on Jacob's prophetic words.

Then there are Naphtali's valleys too. Let us descend. At the mountain bases there are vales of exquisite beauty clothed in the loveliness of a paradise. Even the vale of Chamouni, that rests in peace at the base of Mount Blanc, surpasses not the

beauty of the glens and valleys that nestle amid the spurs of Naphtali's rugged mountains. The largest of these valleys and the one of which we know most, and to which we are most attracted by its sacred associations, the one whose name is as familiar to us as any treasured word can be, is called, "The Land of Gennesaret." It lies seven hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. It was traced by the divinely sacred feet of Christ. Here was taught the parable of the sower and the seed. Here in this lovely plain constantly are heard the songs of birds, that with brilliant plumage fly across its cultivated fields or alight in its foliage and flowers. The birds of the air came down and devoured the seed.

Then there is the water scenery. The melting snows of Hermon in constant streams trickle down the mountain-sides and traverse the lowly plains. Lakes adorn the valleys of Naphtali. The little inland sea of Gennesaret is of the land the special gem. It is a poem without words, a treasure place of poetic thoughts. Its beauty has become a proverb. The blue waters of the lake are a picture framed by great mountains, high tablelands and lovely plains, fringed by flowers of many tints and types and sweetest odors, and by a pebbled shore, the scene of many historic incidents and great events. Withal the beauty and the charm are greatly enhanced by the most sacred associations

with which the earth is blessed. Over the beautiful Galilean Lake there seems to gather a dreamy atmosphere, inviting reminiscent thought, and, out of the sacred past and the exquisite present view, inspiring to new resolves for what is best.

In the little land of Naphtali was found not only great variety of scene, but every variation of climate. The climate varied from the perpetual winter of Hermon's ice-crowned peaks to perpetual summer that reigned on the shore of Gennesaret. Hermon was forever capped with snow. Gennesaret was always clothed with flowers. From the mountain's great height to the deep depression of Gennesaret's vale there was a graduation of the climates of all the zones. This exchange might be accomplished by the journey of a day. Yet it would be as if one had passed from Greenland to the West Indies in one brief day. In the morning he would battle with ice fields and gather his wrappings closely around him. In the evening he would cast his outer robes off, wipe the moisture from his brow, and pursue his journey amid tropical fruits and flowers. Though the northmen of the land, yet when the feast of ingathering rolled around the men of Naphtali were among the first to lay their firstfruits on the Altar in Jerusalem. In sight of perpetual snow, their lowly plain was a perpetual greenhouse, where grain was forced and harvests hurried to maturity.

III.—NAPHTALI'S BLESSINGS

The tribal home suggests the tribal blessings. Let us for a moment listen to what Moses says about this tribe. From Pisgah's height he saw the land in all its extent and marked all its features. As he contemplates this tribe's inheritance he exclaims: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord, possess thou the sea and Darom." Our version: "Possess thou the west and the south." Now in fact Naphtali possessed the opposite of these, namely, the north and the east. Yet the words are true to the facts of the case. Because the western border of Israel's land was the sea, west and sea became synonymous terms. West means sea, and sea means west. Hence, possess thou the west means possess thou the sea. Darom means south, and the word designated the southern slopes of Lebanon. Here it is used as a proper name, designating the southern mountain district of Lebanon.

How truly full of the blessing of the Lord was that beautiful and romantic land, when from its mountain heights to its lowly plains there shone forth in all its heavenly brightness the marvelous light of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, when Jesus Christ, leaving Nazareth, came and dwelt by the seaside in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali.

IV.—NAPHTALI'S CHARACTER

Two traits of Naphtali are brought to notice in his symbol.

1. *His Devotion to his Mountain Home.*—The mountaineer is always devoted to his mountain home. It may be but the rude cottage on the dizzy height or on the steep side, but it is the home where he delights to dwell. Every mountain becomes as a personal friend to the highlander. Man of peace the mountaineer may be, but he will protect his home.

Among the hills of Naphtali nestles the fair city of Kedesh. It is the birthplace and residence of Naphtali's greatest hero, Barak, of military fame. One day a messenger enters the city from the south. He brings tidings to Barak. The tidings are alarming and deeply stir the hearts of the mountaineers. A rumor quickly spreads abroad. King Jabin, with his general Sisera, has rolled out nine hundred chariots of war and mustered his great army and is coming like an avalanche on the northern tribes. Look to your mountain homes, ye men of Naphtali. The war-cry is enough. Ten thousand men rally to the call from the highlands to the Valley of Jezreel. A great storm of hail bursts over Jezreel, driving full in the faces of the Canaanites. In wild confusion the heathen hordes are put to flight. The general himself springs from his chariot and flees

for safety to the mountains, where he hopes to hide among their deep ravines. He seeks refuge in the tent of Heber the Kenite.

A strange sight is that. Amid the towns that crowned the hill-tops and adorned the mountain sides of Naphtali there is a camp of tents, black tents of Bedouins. It is under the oaks near Kedesh, called Oaks of the Wanderers. Why are they there? What do they mean?

Moses married the daughter of Jethro of Arabia. Jethro's descendants accompanied Israel to the promised land. When the host of Israel settled, Heber the Arabian pitched his tent in the land of Naphtali. From that day on the black tents marked the Arabian camp.

Fleeing Sisera, seeing the black tents, thinking he might find a safe refuge there, draws near. Jael, the hostess of the tent, comes forth: "Turn in, my lord, fear not." Hotly pursued, he awaits no urging. Glad to escape pursuit, and to rest his weary body, he goes in. He comes not forth.

In distant Hazor, where Sisera lived, his anxious mother waits. She mounts the tower. Eagerly she looks through the lattice and cries: "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" He comes not. Aye, he will never come. Look within the black tent of Heber. See, Sisera is there. He sleeps, profoundly sleeps. Exhausted nature rests, to restore

its wasted powers. Jael draws near. In one hand she holds a heavy mallet. In the other she grasps the tent pin. Noiselessly she approaches. By a single well-dealt blow, by iron point, death enters at the temple of the sleeping warrior. He does not so much as stir. Death's image merges into its reality. Of all Israel's battles this is the one that confers greatest glory on the tribe of Naphtali—a victory achieved mostly by the valor of Naphtali's mountaineers.

2. *He Giveth Goodly Words*.—Polished words, measured words, or poetry. There are lands which produce no poets, lands which can chill poetic fervor and extinguish any poetic fires wherever kindled. The Muses live not in the great Saharas or on plains of monotonous expanse, but in scenes of beauty and grandeur, to awe and to inspire. If the "poet is born," yet he is born where the scenes of nature kindle and fan the flame of poesy. Barak, the great hero of Naphtali, was a poet too. He had not lived in Naphtali in vain. When he put to flight his foes the highland chief gave himself to song. The beautiful ode which he and Deborah composed and sang was sung before Homer told in verse of Troy's woes. Surely Barak giveth goodly words.

It cannot be questioned that the land of Naphtali giveth goodly words. Hebrew poetry luxuriates in allusions to Naphtali. Hebrew poets ever

thitherwards turned their thoughts when they invoked the Muses. The flowers of sacred poetry have been culled and gathered from the mountains and glens, the plains and waters, of Naphtali. The highland homes, lovely valleys, beautiful streams, rippled lakes and crystal sea, live in the Hebrew poet's songs, and will live while God's Word endures.

The Naphtalites are gone; the highlands are there, but the highlanders of Israel are gone. They have vanished from their homes. The graceful hind well knew its want and its security, when, hotly pursued, it panted after the water brooks and paused by the cool crystal water of the mountain brook, slaked its thirst, and renewed its strength. It outsped its swift pursuer. The hind is there to-day. Naphtali saw the Gospel fountain opened in his land. Its pure, refreshing waters gently flowed. Pursued by foes, his thirsting spirit pants, but he pauses not to drink of the life-giving stream. He exclaims not: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." His strength succumbs. His life is exhausted. He falls a victim to his foes.

XII

JOSEPH THE FAVORITE SON

“ Joseph is a fruitful bough,
Even a fruitful bough by a well;
Whose branches run over the wall:
The archers have sorely grieved him,
And shot at him, and hated him:
But his bow abode in strength,
And the arms of his hands were made strong
By the hands of the mighty God of Jacob;
(From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel):
Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee;
And by the Almighty, who shall bless thee
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lieth under,
Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:
The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the
blessings of my progenitors
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:
They shall be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him that was
separate from his brethren.”

—GEN. 49: 22-26.

JOSEPH occupies a different position from that of the other sons of Jacob. He was not, as each of the others was, the head of a tribe of Israel. We do not read of the tribe of Joseph. We search in vain on the map of tribal divisions for the inherit-

ance of Joseph. His name is not perpetuated in his descendants. The reason of this is that Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were adopted by Jacob as his own. They became the heads of tribes, and all of Joseph's descendants were reckoned under their names and belonged to Ephraim or Manasseh. Joseph stands alone, and in this sense at least is, as Jacob says, "separate from his brethren." We are now to consider the suitableness of Jacob's words to the personal history of Joseph. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will receive a separate consideration.

It is not now proposed minutely to trace the history of Joseph. That history is inimitably recorded in the Word of God. The scope of these studies confines us to this purpose, namely, to show how Joseph's life reflects the patriarchal blessing. The symbol of this favorite son graphically delineates his entire life. It beautifully and faithfully pictures his previous and his subsequent life. We look on this picture drawn thirty-five hundred years ago, and through its still fresh portrayal we become thoroughly acquainted with the man. But what is the picture? Let us look at it.

I.—JOSEPH'S SYMBOL

Joseph's symbol is a vine. "A fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches

run over the wall." Here is the vine, the well, the wall.

The vine is a favorite in Scriptural allusion. It is held in a sort of sacred reserve to represent only what is best and most beloved. In Biblical imagery it is used for the portrayal of what is worthy of highest honor and what dwells nearest to the heart. In the patriarchal blessing the favorite symbol and the favorite son have met. Jacob would not have us for a moment think that any vine, however precious, could rightly represent Joseph. It must be a fruitful vine. Nor this only. He adds another touch—"a fruitful vine by a well." The value of a well in Oriental estimate may be noted in the fact that the same Hebrew word means "eye" and "well." Wells are earth's eyes. In them are mirrored heavenly beauties. One more touch the artist gives: "Whose branches run over the wall." In Palestine the vine is planted on the side of a terraced hill. Walls of stone are built. The vines are trained over these. Thus the largest surface of the vine is exposed to the sun and the ripening of its rich clusters of fruit is hastened. In Joseph's symbolic picture the vine climbs up the wall, trails along its top, and in luxuriant profusion hangs down on the other side.

The vine is indigenous to Palestine. It grows wild there. But its greatest beauty, its largest yield, its most delicious flavor, are the result of culture.

In that culture we find the well, the wall, and the pruning knife. Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall.

The meaning of the symbol is fruitfulness. In Joseph there is the fruitfulness of prosperity; a prosperity which nothing seems to hinder. Even life's sorrows are to him the incisions of the pruning knife's keen edge, producing the greater growth and the larger yield. He is a man of destiny, whose onward, upward move nothing can arrest. Behold the vine. Will you destroy it? Lop off its vigorous branch. Gaining strength from its wound, it sends forth more and stronger shoots. Wall it about. It climbs the wall. It covers the wall. It hangs down on the other side. It prepares and proffers, for its wounds, the richer clusters of its luscious, mellow, fragrant fruit. This is faithfully symbolic of Joseph's life. It is a true picture of his strange and wonderful career.

II.—THE VINE PLANTED, OR JOSEPH IN HIS CHILDHOOD HOME

Joseph the lad is the vine of Eshcol. Eshcol was his home. We come at once to the first thrilling scene in Joseph's life. The curtain rises. We see Joseph the boy at home in Hebron. Hebron is the oldest city in Canaan and, next to Damascus,

probably the oldest city in the world. It was the home of the patriarchs, to which ever and anon after all their wanderings they returned. There Abraham spent the last years of his life. There he and Sarah lie buried. Isaac wanders about, but when you think of him as the old dim-visioned man you must think of him at Hebron. It was at Hebron the ebbing sands of his life's day glided away. Jacob, having fallen out with his father-in-law in the East, comes back to Hebron and lives with his father Isaac.

Hebron, the patriarchal homestead, is in the midst of Eshcol, a valley of exquisite beauty, famed for the luxuriance of its vines and the delicious flavor of its grapes. The grapes of Eshcol are proverbial. Many an ancient vine in that lovely vale to-day yields to the weary traveler its precious fruit. The boyhood of Joseph was spent amid these natural bowers of graceful vines. There with wild delight he roamed and sported, where some hundreds of years later twelve spies, creeping in silence and with caution, cut the huge cluster of grapes and carried it as a trophy to the waiting host of Israel, a specimen of fruit from Joseph's early home. The vine which symbolizes Joseph may be considered a vine of Eshcol.

But look within his home. Who are there? His aged grandfather Isaac still lives. He is there with his whitened locks and dim-visioned eyes.

There is Jacob. There is Leah. Zilpah and Bilhah are there. There are Joseph and Benjamin. The other ten sons are away from home, feeding their flocks upon the mountains. One important person of the household is absent—Rachel. Nor will she ever return to cheer the home whose bright light she had been. Rachel is dead. She did not reach Hebron, but died on the way. She lived in her son, the infant Benjamin. So Joseph was early deprived of the priceless blessing of a faithful mother's care. Therefore he received a double share of his father's love. Jacob pours out his heart's strongest love on the firstborn son of Rachel so tenderly beloved. He gives him a coat of many colors. Fine, beautiful, attractive, it yet lacked one thing to make it perfect. It was woven, fitted, made by hands of those who did not love. There was no mother's love wrought into the seams, hems, and stitches of the pleasing robe.

Joseph is about to leave his home. Clothed in his bright coat, obedient to his father's command, he bears a message to his absent brethren. It is miles away, over the hills and across the streams. His path is beset with perils. He goes alone. The country is wild and unsettled. Ere he departs he bids adieu to those at home, little thinking what those words of parting may mean. We can well picture Jacob watching the lad till he disappears among the distant hills. The boy perhaps looks

back to catch a final glimpse of home embowered in its vines ere it fades away. Will he ever again behold it? Banish such thought of ill. Chase from the mind the shadows which somehow seem to fall. Over the mountains, across the streams, through dark defiles and narrow passes, with bold heart and elastic step, Joseph presses on.

He comes to Shechem. The brethren are not there. A stranger tells him that the shepherds said they would go to Dothan. To Dothan Joseph goes. Dothan means two wells. The wells are there to-day, just on the mountains that from the southern border overlook the Valley of Jezreel. In joy and confidence, conscious of right, the youth draws near, right glad to meet his brethren and greet them with messages from home. He salutes them in his father's name, but for his salutation receives from them only scowls and frowns and threatening words. First death is threatened. Then their hearts somewhat relent. Disrobing him and binding him, they lower him into one of these wells of Dothan. At this juncture, chancing to look over Jezreel's Valley, spreading beneath them far away, they discern in the distance a cloud of dust. It approaches. It proves to be a caravan of merchants. They are on their way to Egypt, the great market of the world. A trade is soon effected. With twelve dollars in their hands what care they for their brother's tears or their father's woes? The

caravan moves on. There has been but slight delay, however momentous the transaction proves to be. The pit is empty. There is one added to the merchants' line. With quickened speed the caravan moves on, unimpeded in its progress by the fact that it now carries a heart weighed down with bitterest sorrow, a life whose brightest prospect seems blighted hopelessly.

III.—THE VINE PRUNED, OR JOSEPH IN ADVERSITY

There gathers now about the lad the shadow of adversity. Long, sad, and weary years are those of Joseph's trial. The pruning knife was sharp, and it was vigorously used. Only the leading features of these scenes we can trace.

1. *Multiplied Calamities*.—It would be difficult to crowd into the same number of years more sorrows, more troubles, graver misfortunes, heavier calamities, keener grief, more heartrending trials, than those which cast their deep, dark shadows across the path of the motherless youth of Eshcol. Each misfortune seems to come linked with that which preceded it by a sort of inevitable fate and irreversible decree. It is a very long list, quickly made, rapidly read, those sorrows of Joseph's life. He was early bereft of a mother's love and care. There was none to whom he could unbosom childhood's sorrows, to whom entrust his secret thoughts,

in whom he could find a safe and sacred repository for his confidential words—a mother's heart. That child has grief, has early felt affliction's keen-edged pruning knife, who at a tender age has stood beside a mother's grave. Joseph felt that pang. Yet youthful Joseph at Rachel's tomb at Bethlehem, weeping over irreparable loss, has not learned sorrow's hardest lesson nor felt affliction's severest blow. This is not to be compared with much that follows. There was still with him one who loved Joseph, and loved him for his mother's sake. From the caresses of a kind, indulgent father the boy is torn, and thrust into the possession of strange and cruel masters. He goes a merchantable commodity to Egypt. Unused to hardship, he is compelled by his new masters to toil on over sandy stretches and under burning sun, until, foot-sore and weary and heart-sick, he reaches the scene of his future remarkable career.

He is hurried to the slave market, is put upon the stand, is surveyed and examined and valued and sold into hopeless servitude. Do the departed hover near us? Do they discern life's checkered scenes? Was Rachel near to shield her boy and shelter him from harm? Into slavery he goes. He follows his purchaser to his home. It was the first home circle he had seen since he left Hebron's charming scenes. He enters not as a son, but as Potiphar's slave. He enters not to be welcomed, but to be directed

to his work. Exactly how long he thus remained in menial service we do not know. The pruning knife was not yet cast aside. To deeper grief must this youth of sorrows go.

Bereft of liberty and home and love, one jewel was still left to him. A poor, penniless slave in a foreign land, one treasure his spoilers had not taken away. This priceless jewel was his spotless name. This also now must go. Accused of fearful crime, of which he was perfectly innocent, he is thrust into prison. In the dark solitude of the Egyptian jail the friendless youth seems to have no prospect but the speedy termination of his earthly career, begun in hope, but blasted by multiplied calamities. Every prison bar, every prison guard, seems to proclaim that Joseph is doomed to die—ignominiously die. Farewell, son of sorrow! For Jacob's sake, for Rachel's sake, farewell! He enters the jail. The door is shut. Joseph is alone to weep, to wonder, and to pray.

2. *Multiplied Blessings*.—Pruning has two features—the incision of the knife and the shooting forth of the subsequent bud; the cutting and the growing; the lopping off and the increment of vine. Walk through the vineyard. Admire its beautiful growth. Where is its foliage and fruit most luxuriant? Where do the largest, best clusters hang? Here. Now look beneath the leaves and fruit—not far away from the best results a scar

is seen. It tells of the process of pruning. You can make the vine grow where you will. You make it grow by taking for the time its growth away. You make it produce by laying it bare.

If these were prunings from which Joseph suffered, we may look for growth and fruit just where the scars are left. Misfortunes crowd his life. Yet in each misfortune he seems the most fortunate of men. With intensest interest we trace the troubled scenes of his life. The darkest scenes appear before us. Yet as we look on them, and weep over them, and see them in their bearing, we feel not so much inclined to call them misfortunes as fortunes in disguise. Reckless pruning it seems to be, but it produces wondrous growth and happy yield.

A slave! Yes; but in slavery the most faithful servant of the land. From menial service he rises to be the ruler of his master's house. A prisoner! Yes; seemingly condemned to death. Yet he soon finds access to the jailor's heart, and is allowed unusual favors. In that jail there springs up a vine that brings to Joseph a happy release from all his calamities. Like Jonah's gourd, it grew up and bore fruit in a single night. The chief butler dreamed—a vine, three branches, budded, blossomed, yielded fruit, fruit pressed, wine in Pharaoh's cup. Joseph interprets the dream. The butler is restored to royal favor and his former

office. Joseph: "Think on me, when it shall be well with thee." Day by day passes. No token of remembrance from the restored butler reaches the forgotten Joseph in the jail. Two years thus pass away.

Royal messengers come to the jail. They ask for Joseph. Why for Joseph? Pharaoh is in trouble about his dreams. He has heard of the dream of the vine and its successful interpretation. Joseph dresses, shaves himself, and hurries to the palace. He hears the dream, and gives the interpretation of it. Joseph entered on that day with a hopeless prospect of a lingering life in prison walls. He enters the palace a slave and, in human judgment, a criminal, clad in prison garb. He comes forth from the palace. See. Who is it? Can it be Joseph? A pure, white linen robe adorns his person. He has the stately stepping of a king. The royal ring sparkles on his hand. A chain, not of slavery, not of culprit, not of iron, but a golden chain of regal honor adorns his neck. He is seated in a chariot of brilliant equipage. Its swiftly rolling wheels convey him not back to prison, but to his palatial residence. As he rides, heralds shout before him, "Bow the knee!" Joseph, the friendless youth, the slave, the accused, the prisoner, is now ruler of the land, second only to Pharaoh, the ruler of the land. Was there ever another such transition in a day?

Mark this feature—how closely allied the sufferings and the honors, the prunings and the growth and yield. The very hand that lays him low is the hand that lifts him up. A dream is the occasion of all this trouble. This dreamer cometh. A dream is the occasion of his elevation. The many-colored coat is torn from his person at the pit. A beautiful robe adorns his manly form as he rides in the chariot of the king.

IV.—THE FRUITFUL VINE, OR JOSEPH IN PROSPERITY

A fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. Long pruned, it now is laden with rich and abundant fruit. Joseph's character is one of the most beautiful presented in sacred or profane history. He was patient in dark adversity. He was moderate, wise, and considerate in dazzling prosperity. We may well admire his character. There seems to be one flaw in it, which we cannot fairly pass by without a mention. It seems to have been overlooked in considering Joseph's character. Is it a slight trace of selfishness, which in the motherless boy was naturally though undesignedly cultivated by an indulgent father? We catch a trace of it in earliest life, when we read that he reported on his brethren to his father, making mention of their evil ways. This we do not like. We see it at its fullness when ele-

vated to honor, influence, and wealth he did not immediately communicate with his sorrowing father. What excuse can be made for this? The same thing is noticed in the fact that he named his firstborn son Manasseh, that is, Forgetfulness, exclaiming, "God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house."

This only shows that Joseph was not perfect. He was a great and noble man. His name is written high in the records of lasting fame. The seven years of plenty rolled by. The seven years of famine wearily wore away. Joseph is at the helm, steering the vessel of state. Around him at length are settled Jacob and his large household. There are those whom Joseph loved and those whom he has freely forgiven. Old Isaac died in the year Joseph was elevated to be ruler of the land of Egypt. He died at Hebron and was buried in the family sepulcher where Abraham and Sarah and Rebekah rested from their labors.

A reference to two events will conclude what we have to say of Joseph.

1. *Jacob Is Dead.*—His body lies embalmed and shrouded in Goshen. Joseph fell upon his father's face and wept upon him and kissed him. It is filial love in tears. What memories thronged his brain as he gave vent to grief over the cold, fixed features of that father's face! The dying man with his latest breath had spoken of Rachel. Over the memories

of these two loving parents Joseph could only weep. "Bury me at Hebron," was Jacob's request. The funeral procession was formed. Joseph and his house, his brethren and their houses, all save the little ones and such others as could not go, the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, the elders of the land of Egypt—all went. It was an imposing pageant that moved up from Goshen to Canaan's land. The people of Canaan said: "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians." The body is carried to Hebron, in the lovely vale of Eshcol, and there entombed. Who can imagine the thoughts of Joseph as once more, and only once, he revisits the scene of his childhood days? He vividly recalls that day in the distant past when in obedience to the voice so recently forever silenced he went forth from his happy home to which as a home he returned no more!

2. *Joseph Is Dead.*—Ere Joseph died he had said, "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land into the land of Canaan." They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. Two hundred years roll by. The slaves of Egypt are hurrying to lay down their shackles and begone to the land of Canaan. One precious treasure they do not forget. A precious casket holds what is of inestimable value to the Israelites. Forty years of wandering they endure. But all through their fiery trials, in the camp of Ephraim, composed of

Rachel's sons, this precious casket is borne and guarded. What does it contain? What precious legacy is within it? Come to Shechem and we shall see. Their journey is now done. In a parcel of ground which Jacob had bought before he went to Egypt a grave is prepared. The casket is opened and the bones of Joseph are interred. Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying: "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry my bones from hence."

XIII

EPHRAIM, THE JEALOUS TRIBE

"Ephraim and Manasseh are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.—GEN. 48: 5.

"They are the ten thousands of Ephraim."—DEUT. 33: 17.

IN the profuse blessing which Jacob showers on Joseph there is no intimation of the division of Joseph's family into two great tribes. There is a unity in the blessing. Joseph shall be a fruitful bough. We are not informed in what way his descendants shall share the blessing and illustrate its truth. We turn to Moses' farewell blessings on the tribes. At the close of his address to Joseph's host he adds these words: "They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh." This is a recognition of these two elements of Joseph's house, and a statement of their relative position. We shall now seek to trace Joseph's blessing in Ephraim's tribe—a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a well, whose branches run over the wall. We shall find in Ephraim prosperity, exuberant prosperity, prosperity abused by arrogance and jealousy.

It is interesting to study the varied effects of prosperity on men. Joseph was patient in adversity and prudent in dazzling prosperity. Asher yielded to the luxuries of his royal loaf and became indifferent to everything but ease. Ephraim, crowned with all the blessings which Jacob and Moses could crowd into words, yielded not to effeminate luxury, but became haughty, proud, jealous, and arrogant. Ephraim is the jealous tribe.

I.—EPHRAIM'S PROSPERITY

The vine has a luxuriant growth. Let us enumerate the elements of prosperity which render this tribe illustrious.

1. *The Name*.—Ephraim's name deserves a passing notice. There is something in a name to help or hinder life's great work. There are those who carry burdens in their names. Others by the names they bear are cheered and helped along life's way. These old Bible names are full of meaning. Their meaning and their melody are often lost to us when we do not pause to make inquiry of them. So it is with Ephraim. Who has stopped his rapid reading to learn what this name may teach?

It was a time of plenty. Every fertile field in the productive valley of the Nile was surpassing all previous records for great harvests. The broad expanse of richest soil teems with precious grain.

The conquest of the scythe is great. Harvests of rich abundance are gathered and stored away. Granaries are packed with treasures of wheat. The horn of plenty, surcharged with grain, overflows with its abundance. It is the seven years of plenty of which Joseph told. Amid these happy scenes of plenty there lay a newborn babe in Joseph's house. What shall be its name? How shall the child be called? The times suggest the name. Joseph speaks. He calls the child Ephraim. Ephraim means fruitful. "God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." The name is consonant with the pleasing note of fruitfulness which rings throughout the Valley of the Nile. It seems, too, to anticipate the symbol Jacob is yet to give to Joseph's house—a fruitful vine.

2. *The Blessing.*—A little before the general blessing of Jacob's sons there is a private, smaller gathering at Jacob's house, in Jacob's room. Jacob is sick. Joseph hastens to him, with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The patriarch adopts them as his own. They are mine, he says. Then he reaches out his hands to bless them. Joseph arranges them so that Manasseh, the older, will come under Jacob's right hand and Ephraim under the left. The patriarch's eyes are dimmed by age and approaching death. But he crossed his hands, the right hand resting on Ephraim, and the left on Manasseh. Joseph remonstrates to no purpose.

"In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh; and he set Ephraim before Manasseh."

How often we are called to note this inversion of nature's order: Abel before Cain; Abram before Nahor and Haran; Isaac before Ishmael; Jacob before Esau; Joseph before Reuben; Ephraim before Manasseh. The exception almost supersedes the rule.

Connected with this inversion there are several interesting facts that invite a casual notice. Manasseh means forgetfulness; forgetfulness of "all my father's house." Manasseh pays the price of forgetfulness in losing the richer blessing of the eldest son. While Manasseh's name seems to militate against him, Ephraim's name seems to serve the owner of it well. It brings up the tenderest associations of Jacob's life. He pronounces the name Ephraim, and his thought by it is carried back to a most sacred spot. Yes, he says, I buried Rachel in the way of Ephrath. Ephraim and Ephrath are the same word with slightly different endings. Who can tell how much these names of Joseph's sons had to do with the blessings they received?

Mark too the words: "As Reuben and Simeon are mine, so Ephraim and Manasseh are mine." Advanced not only from the grade of grandsons to that of sons, but they are put side by side with the two oldest sons. This makes Ephraim the compeer

of Jacob's oldest son. In after days Ephraim claimed supremacy of all the host of Israel, and attained it too.

3. *His Numbers*.—While the numbers of the tribe do not at once mount up to the highest figures, yet Ephraim early gave promise of his future great career. In estimating the numbers of this tribe we must remember that Joseph was next to the youngest of his father's family; that his immediate family seems to have been small, and that Ephraim represents only a part of Joseph's house. We must also take into the account the fact that Ephraim received a heavy shock and a serious check in a certain affair which is incidentally alluded to in the Bible record. This allusion may have wholly escaped the notice of casual readers. 1 Chr. 7: 21—"The sons of Ephraim, whom the men of Gath slew, because they came down to take away their cattle." After Jacob's death, and before the Israelites were reduced to slavery in Egypt, the sons of Ephraim made a raid upon the men of Gath. The Jewish Rabbins say that they intended to take the land of Canaan. Whatsoever their object was, the plan signally failed, and many men of Ephraim were slain. Their father Ephraim mourned over his fallen sons, and named his next son Beriah in commemoration of his sorrow. Of this son of sorrow came Ephraim's greatest hero, who shed a luster not on his tribe alone, but on all Israel.

4. *The Great Hero*.—Many eminent names are found in Ephraim's lists. Among them there is one pre-eminent, whose glory eclipses all the rest. He is of Beriah's house, where the shadows of sorrow early fell because of Ephraim's sad disaster, when Ephraim mourned his fallen sons. Great blessings often emerge from the shadows. Out of the crucial fire comes the purest gold. Who is this hero of Ephraim's tribe?

The host of Israel is camped in Moab's height, near Jordan's brink, close by the land of Canaan. Israel is ready now to cross. One hindrance remains. How strange! He who led them all the way is their hindrance now. Moses cannot cross, and he is in command. In reverential awe the people are gathered around the Sacred Tent. Two men approach the Sanctuary door. In solemn stillness the people watch, thrilled with the deep feeling that some great event portends. Moses and Joshua walk side by side toward the outer curtain of the Tent, and then disappear beyond its heavy folds. They reappear. There has come about a change. Moses now has no more to do but say farewell, ascend the height of Pisgah and die by divine command. Joshua is in command; Joshua, the son of Nun, of Beriah's house, and of the tribe of Ephraim.

Proud moment was this for Joseph's house and Ephraim's tribe. With what a thrill of pleasure they must have seen their noble chieftain successor

to the mighty and incomparable Moses, commander of Israel's host. In all that vast company he was the only man, save one, who, having crossed the Red Sea forty years before, was now permitted to pass over Jordan into the land.

From the moment when Joshua assumed command there is no doubt the tribe of Ephraim wielded the greatest influence in Israel. It claimed and held supremacy in all the host. We are apt to overlook this fact, because we are familiar with the future glories of Judah's royal line. Judah's glories had not yet fully come. From the passage of the Jordan for a period of four hundred years Ephraim largely influences the destinies of Israel; certainly more than any other tribe. Though for a long time among the smaller tribes, yet Ephraim seemed borne along by a consciousness of power, right, inheritance worthy of their great ancestor who sat next to Pharaoh on the throne. With brave hearts and strong wills and firm resolves they were determined to win the day. Their indomitable purpose to rule nothing could repress.

5. *His Inheritance*.—His inheritance was the *physical* center of the land. Our geographical references thus far have been to the north, south, east, and west of the land. We have said little of the central portion of Canaan. We have tarried a while amid the wild and rugged hills of Gilead; we have traced the wilderness and vine-clad hills of Judah;

we have looked down on the seaboard plains of Shephelah, Sharon, and Acre; we have admired the grand heights and awful depths of Lebanon and Hermon in the land of Naphtali; we have seen the lovely valley of Jezreel: but in Ephraim's home, the center of the land, we have a scenery different from all the rest. There is no wilderness, no tangled growth, but abundant olive groves, of softest color and most attractive beauty. There are no mountain torrents, wildly leaping, impetuously dashing down, but many a crystal fountain and gently flowing brook. It is these fountains, rills, and brooks that give beauty to this central portion of the land. From Sharon's plain to Jordan's lowly vale Ephraim's inheritance abounds with lovely scenes of peaceful, quiet, gentle beauty.

It is the *ecclesiastical* center of the land. Within its borders the Tabernacle stood for four hundred years. From Joshua to David Shiloh was the sacred shrine. There the lots were drawn in the distribution of the land. Among all the tribes Ephraim alone, when his lot was drawn, found himself already at his home. To Ephraim's land thrice every year the tribes all came to celebrate the great annual feasts.

It is the *civil* center of the land. For many years the government proceeded from Ephraim's land. It really seemed that Ephraim held all the honors of the land. Shechem is the seat of government. It

rests between Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south. Near its eastern limit this little vale is scarcely sixty rods wide. From these mountain-sides were pronounced the curses and the blessings. This little valley rang with the loud Amen of the assembled host.

Within a small circle around Shechem cluster many sacred memories and relics of great historic events. There is Jacob's well, illustrious as Jacob's well, and rendered more so by the fact that it is one of the few spots, if not the only spot, of the land of which it may be positively stated that the Lord was once exactly there. We pass around the little circuit of the well and we have crossed the Saviour's tracks. The wonder is that a well should have been cut there through the rock, a deep well, when numerous fountains bubble up all over the little vale. It is the best watered part of Palestine. But the well is there. Someone made it. There is no reasonable doubt that it is veritably Jacob's well.

Another sacred place invites our notice. Amid the corn-fields that encroach on Ebal's side a tomb is seen, within which Jacob's bones were laid. The great ancestor's sepulcher is well placed amid the happy scenes and prosperous homes of Ephraim.

High above the fertile vale rise the heights of Gerizim and Ebal. Here it is that the people renewed their covenant vows and listened to the faltering voice of dying Joshua. Here, as the last

act of his memorable life, Joshua reared the witness stone where Abraham built his first altar, and where Jacob buried the idol gods so strangely found within his camp. Surely Ephraim's was the land of sacred memories. These were great historic scenes which as memorials greeted Israel's eyes and stirred their patriotic souls.

Ephraim seemed born to rule. Ephraim's home seemed fitted for a monarch's throne. Not only abounding in monuments of national greatness and glory, but the land itself was a national watch-tower whence to survey the land. Where first on your northward journey do you catch a glimpse of Hermon's snowy peak? On Ephraim's height. Where can you, looking west, see the shining waters of the Mediterranean Sea, and turning eastward descry the dark outlines of Gilead's and Moab's heights? On Ephraim's high tableland.

If noble qualities are inherited from illustrious parentage, if patriarchal blessings are worthy of regard, if environment helps to make the man, then where in all the host of Israel shall we look for the elements of true greatness, patriotism, renown, heroism, if not among the favored sons of Ephraim? Ephraim is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a well, whose branches run over the wall. From the passage of Jordan to the establishment of Saul as king, Ephraim is the ruling tribe.

II.—EPHRAIM'S JEALOUSY

Surely Ephraim had enough to gratify a worthy ambition. But it is often true that the more we have the larger our desires grow. Wealth consists not in what we possess, but in contentment with what we have, and in what we do not crave. A contented, meek, and humble spirit is greater riches than the ten thousands of Ephraim. Ephraim was a jealous tribe. He could not forget Jacob's words, "As Reuben and Simeon are mine, so Ephraim and Manasseh are mine." As Reuben, so Ephraim. All the while he seems afraid that someone will cheat him out of what he regards his birthright as the compeer of Jacob's eldest son. He is as one who never thinks that he is rising in the world unless someone else is getting trampled down. He will ascend, but it must be on the ruined fortunes of others. See how this crops out in Ephraim's history.

Gideon returns, crowned with glory, after his wonderful victory over the Midianites. With three hundred men he put the mighty host to flight. That was glory, uncommon glory. Some of the other tribes may reap a little honor from the victory. What does Ephraim think? If the venture had ended in defeat it would have been what such rash men deserve! But it was a victory! "Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when

thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?" Gideon: "Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?" Surely you have enough glory to spare me this one honor.

Jephthah comes home with victory perched on his standard. Israel has again been triumphant. The true patriot ought to rejoice. Jealousy can never be patriotic. Ephraim would rather see the other tribes defeated than victorious without his aid. Ephraim's idea of rivalry was not the generous sort, where all may rise together; but like the "see-saw," where for one to rise the other must go down. Jephthah comes home. His heart is oppressed by the calamity which has fallen on his home. Hear Ephraim: "Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thy house upon thee with fire." Bold troopers could not stand that. War is a game at which two can play. The Ephraimites, more querulous than mighty, are put to flight by Jephthah's brave men. The remnant rush down to cross the Jordan and get home; but sentinels already guard the Jordan fords. "Are you an Ephraimite?" Oh, no! Say Shibboleth. "Sibboleth." The Ephraimite could not say Shibboleth. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were slain that day.

David is carried back to his palace after Absalom

is slain. His friends have rallied around him. It is no time to wait for the tardy. When the glad occasion is all over, here come the Ephraimites. "Why did ye despise us that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Ephraim." No wonder. Judah was provoked. It was the muttering of the coming storm that was to desolate the land: Judah and Ephraim.

We enter now upon a thrilling page of Israel's history, in which we see the two great tribes of Judah and Ephraim arrayed against each other. We trace the causes and the momentous results of the intertribal strife. David is crowned as king. David is a man of Judah. Ephraim in sullen silence yields, a silence which promises no good. David establishes his throne in Hebron within Judah's borders. Shechem is shorn of its metropolitan glories. Shechem was in Ephraim's land. Ephraim mutters indignation and cherishes revenge. Another blow is dealt the proud and jealous tribe. The holy shrine of Shiloh is robbed of its sacred honors. The Tabernacle is reared in the new city of Jerusalem. The honors have all been snatched from Ephraim. His land has been made a land of relics, that point to glories past.

Jealousy puts on the fuel and fans the fire. Presently the fire will burst forth into blaze and will

consume. From what we know of Ephraim we judge he will not yield without a struggle. The glories of David's reign seem to have held Ephraim in abeyance—in abeyance only. There was no love for even David. He was Judah's king. Solomon reigns in peace. The sullen spirit of Ephraim watches and waits for its desired opportunity.

At Solomon's court a young Ephraimite is seen—a marked young man, a soldier of some distinction. Jeroboam is his name. One day he walks out of Jerusalem alone. A prophet of Shiloh—old abandoned Shiloh, shrine of reminiscent glory, Ephraim's deserted holy place—meets him, tears his prophetic robe into twelve pieces and gives Jeroboam ten, and promises to him a kingdom. Solomon hears of it. Jeroboam seeks safety by flight to Egypt. So his bright destiny seems to fail. Solomon dies. Rehoboam is to be crowned. Where shall the coronation take place? Something must be done to satisfy the Ephraimites. He will be crowned at the old Ephraimite capital at Shechem. He will give them a pageant, as their power is gone. He miscalculates the men. A show will not suffice to gratify the men that claim a great reality of right.

The grand procession is accomplished, the pageant is done, the inspiring ceremony has concluded. The crown now rests on Rehoboam's head. Is Ephraim satisfied? Is he content be-

cause his old capital has been mocked by an empty rite?

Make way! Here comes a man. He rushes into the presence of the new-made king. Rehoboam's countenance falls as he sees before him his father's old enemy. In respectful terms Jeroboam addresses the king, respectful, but positive and decided: "Thy father made our yoke heavy. Now make it lighter and we will serve thee." The old counselors advise concession. The young counselors advise more rigorous measures. Rehoboam: "My father made your yokes heavy: I will add to your yokes. My father chastened you with whips: I will chasten you with scorpions."

Foolish man! He threw away his kingdom by a word. As well strike a match on the head of a powder keg as speak thus to the chafed spirit of Ephraim. What sound is this? Is it "Long live the king"? Listen again. Ebal and Gerizim resound with the warlike shout. "To your tents, O Israel! What portion have we in David's house? Neither have we inheritance in the Son of Jesse." To your tents! To arms!

Where is Rehoboam? He came in state, with him a royal retinue. He came to throw dust into the eyes of these restless Ephraimites. But they were smarter than he. See, he flees in his chariot, as on wings of the wind he is borne. Nor does he

stop till he is safely guarded in his palace at Jerusalem.

It was the last time a king of Judah thought of being crowned in Ephraim's capital.

Another coronation is seen at Shechem. The crown of Israel is placed on Jeroboam's head. The grand old kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon is rent in twain. On its ruins two kingdoms rise: Judah under the foolish Rehoboam and Israel under crafty Jeroboam. Why the rent? Need we ask? It was not an aspiration after greater liberty. It was not because of the burdens of taxation. They incurred heavier burdens. It was the outbreking of long pent-up hatred. It was jealousy repressed, then resistless. The story is told in a few words: The words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Ephraim.

XIV

MANASSEH

“They are the thousands of Manasseh.”

—DEUT. 33: 17.

MANASSEH was Joseph's eldest son, but after Jacob's blessing he takes the second place. Before the blessing it is Manasseh and Ephraim. After the blessing it is Ephraim and Manasseh. We are now to consider the less eminent son and less eminent tribe of Joseph's house. While the larger blessing went to Ephraim, a rich blessing was given to Manasseh. “He shall become a people, and he also shall be great.” The glories of Manasseh's tribe, though surpassed by the celebrity of Ephraim, still were great. The tribe ranked high in the host of Israel. In Manasseh's history are not wanting traces of Joseph's symbol: a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The prosperity of this tribe was great, beautifully illustrating Jacob's blessing on Joseph: “whose branches run over the wall.” We shall notice the walls over which ran the branches of this luxuriant vine.

I.—THE WALL OF ADVERSITY

The branches of this vine triumphed over the wall of adversity; a wall at whose base such multitudes lie in helpless lifelessness or in hopeless apathy. Not so is it with Manasseh. Two items of adversity invite our notice.

1. *In the Personal History of Manasseh.*—The firstborn son, born amid scenes of great abundance and of royal honors which by Pharaoh's command were bestowed on Joseph, named Manasseh because welcomed as a suggestion of Joseph's forgetfulness of all his sorrows, the strong affection of Joseph seemed to center on this son, and to be undiverted from him even when Ephraim was born. Manasseh seems to have been Joseph's favorite son. Doubtless both these boys, like Moses at a later day, were educated in all branches of Egyptian lore. The ruler of the land would scarcely allow his sons, the pride of his heart and home, to grow up in ignorance and plainness. Cultured, according to the times, by contact with nobility and royalty itself, these youths were very unlike the plain herdsmen and shepherds of Goshen, Israel's abode.

Tradition claims that the interpreter whom Joseph employed to communicate with his brethren when he wished to seem not acquainted with their language was none other than Manasseh, whom, if he had forgotten his father's house, Joseph had not

forgotten to teach his father's language. Tradition also says that when Simeon's Samson-like strength bade defiance to Joseph's servants and they could not bind him, a youth stepped forth and by superior strength bound him with strong cords, and that the powerful youth was Manasseh. There seems to have been no natural inferiority in Manasseh. So far as there is any evidence at all, his was a splendid physique, herculean strength, some education, polished manners, and winsome ways that endeared him to his father, secured and retained paternal love. There was no natural defect, no inherent inferiority, that marked the eldest son for subordinate rank.

Joseph brings his two sons to Jacob for his patriarchal blessing—for Manasseh and Ephraim. Most unexpectedly, most persistently, most arbitrarily, the dim-visioned patriarch crosses his hands. He defies Joseph, who remonstrates; defies nature, that asserts her claim; defies rights that establish and confirm expectation, and inverts the order of the names and the value of the blessings he bestows. This is Manasseh's first adversity. He is degraded from his birthright to the second place for no reason we can discern. Like Esau he was degraded. But unlike Esau, he swears no vengeance against his younger though preferred and honored brother. Hand in hand they come to their grandfather's house, and, to Manasseh's credit

be it said, so far as we can trace events, bound by fraternal love they return to their palatial home. The vine drooped not, but ran over adversity's high, steep, rugged wall.

2. *In the Tribal History of Manasseh.*—The forty years of wandering in the wilderness were a terrible wall of adversity. Pathless ways, ravenous beasts, fiery serpents, scorching sun, burning sand, fearful judgments, rolling thunders, quaking earth, frequent deaths, sad burials of the loved along the way, rapid marches, long pilgrimages, weary waitings, great reverses: it seems enough to wear life out and quench the fire of hope. Long, long dreary years—when will they cease? It is not surprising that some of the tribes at least should complete their forty years of pilgrimage with greatly reduced numbers. We should expect but a remnant of a host to reach the limit of their protracted woes.

They camp near Jordan's brink. The swollen stream is all that now divides them from the promised land, the long-desired Canaan. The journey is completed. We move among them and listen to their reminiscent story. Five of these tribes have lost in numbers. How is it with Simeon? He has but a remnant left. His roll falls 37,000 short. Ephraim and Naphtali fall short 8000 each. Gad is short by 5000 men. Reuben is less by 2700 names. No wonder! It is rather

strange that anyone is left to tell the story of accumulated and protracted woes. But seven tribes have gained. Dan, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, and Asher have gained each a few thousands. One tribe counts in its list 20,500 more names than when it filed out of Sinai's camp in the shadow of the sacred mount. It has fed on desert sands; it has grown on scorching winds; it has multiplied amid diseases, plagues, poisons, and frequent deaths. Do we imagine what tribe that is? It is Manasseh, the twelfth in numbers, the very least at the beginning of the march; the sixth in size when the tribal roll is called on the border of the promised land: whose branches run over adversity's high wall.

II.—THE WALL OF GIGANTIC FOES

Let us listen to the story of one of Manasseh's heroic deeds. The time is just before Israel crosses the Jordan to enter Canaan's goodly land.

On the east of Jordan, reaching northward from Gilead to the base of the snowy Hermon, lies the famous land of Bashan. Like the land of Naphtali, which it joins at Hermon's base, Bashan is the land of poetry and song. Not that it has given to the world famous poets and songsters, but it has given songs and poems to the geniuses of other lands. There are poems in its hills and dales and streams. Many a happy thought has been garnished by its

flowers. Among the weeping willows of Babylon Ezekiel delights to sing of Bashan's mighty oaks. David far in the south beautifies his sacred songs with allusions to Bashan's mountain wilds. Jeremiah, in the time of Israel's dearth, speaks of Bashan's luxuriant pasture grounds. Micah, Judah's out-of-door prophet, reminds us of Bashan's fertile soil and lowing herds of fattened cattle. It is a glorious mountain land, abounding in fortresses where bristling warriors in safety dwell, interspersed with as fine a pasture land as the world affords. Such is the general character of the land—a tempting prize for the spoiler's hand. Happy the people who can secure this rich inheritance.

But there is one feature of it which has not yet been mentioned. At the time to which our thoughts are turned it is the realm of a giant king. Forty years before, the frightened spies, recently from Eshcol, told about the giants of the land. Fright magnified their vision. Scared people see largely. We are like grasshoppers in their sight, so said the spies. But here in Bashan a genuine giant lives. Og, King of Bashan, is his name. He is the last of his mighty race. We need not fall back on absurd legends of his wonderful size; as, for instance, that he was so tall that the waters of the flood came up only to his thighs, and he waded through. Scripture facts are wonderful enough. We have the dimensions of his bed given in the

Bible. Thus we can come very near his stature. His bed was fifteen feet by six feet. A man approximating fifteen feet would be no small curiosity in this day, and, being warlike, would strike no small terror to the heart of his foe.

His kingdom was all Bashan. His capital was the fortress Edrei, the meaning of which is "strength." Its location is a strange one. Without water, save what is caught from the clouds of heaven; without access, except over sharp rocks and through defiles almost impracticable: strength and security are the grand objects sought and found in this fortress amid Bashan's wilds. This rocky castle of old King Og rears its rugged battlements from a plain that, gently undulating like the sea and arrayed in the verdure of a paradise, spreads out around the fortress. Do you see the picture? Mountains all around like a wall raised up against the sky; within, a lovely, fertile, undulating vale; in the center a frowning fortress, rugged sides, bristling battlements: within all that, at the center of all the scene, the ruling spirit of the realm, Og, giant King of Bashan.

See yonder in the distance a host of warriors. Cautiously they file through the narrow mountain-way. They descend into the valley, there pitch their tents. They camp in the garden of the giant king. Who are these brave men? They are of Israel. But not all Israel is there. The captain of the little

army is Jair, the chieftain of Manasseh's tribe. These eager soldiers are Manasseh's brave and fearless men. Will they storm that castle? Will they sacrifice their lives on those rugged rocks? They are brave, but they are not rash. In Jair, their captain, there beats an unfearing heart, there reigns a cool, strategic skill. He camps and waits.

Now! There is just what he has been waiting for. The castle door opens. Soldiers from within come forth. Towering above them all there comes the giant Og himself. Will these men of Manasseh turn and flee? Not they. Forward is the word of Jair. Eagerly the men obey. On the plain of Edrei there is a mighty conflict, giant bodies against giant souls. Terrific is the clash. But at last the gigantic king falls, his warriors turn and flee. Jair and his brave band are victors of the field. Edrei's frowning heights are now their own.

This is but a beginning. Jair and his braves capture sixty cities fenced with high walls, gates and bars. They sweep the land. How strange this seems to us in this land of ours, this land of great distances! A little state of Bashan, twenty by thirty miles, has sixty cities. It seems incredible. Many a doubt overtakes the Bible-reader here. Many other doubts we have are as foundationless as these, for the cities are in that land to-day. The cities of Bashan stand to-day, scarcely ruins, but tenantless. The houses are there to-day, built of massive stone—

stone roofs, stone doors, stone hinges, unimpaired by the storms of thirty-five hundred years that have swept over them. There stands old Edrei, which Jair, captain of Manasseh's band, wrested from Bashan's giant king.

Bashan was subdued. The host of Israel is ready to cross the Jordan and possess the promised land. Reuben and Gad, because of their great herds of cattle, ask to be settled in the rich pasture lands of Gilead. Are we surprised to learn that a committee comes from Manasseh's tribe to request for some of them a settlement in Bashan's hills? Not because they are herdsmen and shepherds. The reason is very plain. They wish their homes in the land which with God's help they have wrested from the giant foe. Hence we find the record that half of Manasseh's tribe settled on the east side of Jordan, and occupied all Bashan. Looking on the map of tribal settlement, we find the name of Manasseh just above the name of Gad on the east of Jordan. Half of Manasseh's tribe settled there.

This land is rendered more illustrious in future days. Down the western slope of Bashan's tableland ran the herd of swine into the sea, driven by the demons Jesus cast out from the unhappy man. On Bashan's grassy slopes the thousands sat when Jesus multiplied the loaves and gave them all to eat. Here too is that Arabia into which Saul of Tarsus went to learn of God in solitude.

Manasseh is as the fruitful vine, whose branches run over the wall.

III.—THE WALL OF OPPOSING HOSTS

Manasseh's spirit, undaunted by adversity, undaunted by gigantic foes, is equally undaunted by overwhelming numbers of his opposing hosts. But once more in the history of the nation does Manasseh come to the front and engage the nation's eye. We may appropriately notice here a prominent trait of this noted tribe, a trait worthy of highest admiration. Possessing truly heroic qualities, the tribe never seems greedy of applause. Always brave and warlike, Manasseh never seems to seek personal glory. He took little part in the management of public affairs. He left that to Ephraim. But he was always ready for emergencies. Manasseh has a record in which there is very little that is wrong and much that is deserving of highest commendation.

Those of this tribe who did not settle in Bashan found an ample inheritance west of Jordan. Their portion reached from Carmel's dense forests on the seaboard to Jordan on the east, just south of the valley of Jezreel. In Manasseh's portion were Dothan's wells, into one of which Joseph the lad was put. Happy coincidence it is that this relic of the past should fall within the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

The incident to which we now turn is one of the most renowned in all history, and confers chief glory on Manasseh's tribe.

Two hundred years had passed since the crossing of the Jordan and the settlement in the land. What happy, prosperous years they might have been! To what happy results they might have led! If the people had obeyed God's Word all would have gone on well. But two hundred years of disobedience were yielding now their bitter fruit. Look over the land and see its desolation at the time to which we turn. Every year hordes of enemies scour the land from end to end and sweep away its produce. The farmer breaks up his ground, sows, and, just as he prepares to reap, down comes a horde of heathen, like the bird of prey that watches for its victim and swoops down on it, and garners the wheat and leaves the farmer to starve. The people become perfectly broken-hearted and discouraged. Take the history of one family. It is the picture of all.

Abi-ezer with his family, with sad heart, leaves his comfortable home and hides from the cruel foe in some den or cave of earth. He and his go out from day to day and cultivate a little piece of land hidden in some mountain glen, hoping that the marauders may overlook it in their search. Day by day one less the sons come home. The youths have been found and slain. At last one son is left in this sorrowing family of Manasseh's tribe. His

name is Gideon. For seven long weary years this sort of life is lived.

Gideon alone in a sequestered nook is busy threshing the wheat which he has succeeded in saving from the grasping hands of cruel Midianites. He is threshing it in a wine vat, where in past days merrily the song of vintage rang and nimbly moved the dancers' feet. All now is silent grief. Even Gideon may never reach his home. He may even now be watched by those who let him thresh, but who will take the grain. A voice not far away breaks the silence. Gideon, startled in his solitude, turns, and lo! a stranger whose approach had been unheard now speaks: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." "Then why thus? Where are His miracles?" "Thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites." Gideon prays to be excused from such a task. His hope is gone. With true hospitality, from his limited supply he provides a simple repast. The rock becomes an altar, the food a sacrifice, flames burst forth to consume the offering. The stranger has vanished. So strange, so sudden, the apparition, Gideon recoils. He wishes some greater assurance. His thought is in a whirl.

Gideon put a fleece of wool on the floor. He asked the Lord to let the dew be on the fleece and not on the floor—and it was so. Again, he asked that the fleece be dry and the floor wet with dew—and it was so. Then fled his doubts. He believed

in his call and began his work. He sounds the trumpet, whose music had so long been silent. How its music rang through the land! The veterans of olden days in their hiding-places heard the familiar sound. They could not stay in the shadows of the caves and dens. The old war horse will prance when the martial music sounds. These men of Israel come from their haunts to Gideon's camp on Gilboa's mountain-side. Sleeping patriotism is waking up. Trembling spirits are shaking off their fears. How many? Thirty-two thousand. Good! But look at four times thirty-two thousand Midianites camping in Jezreel's plain.

To-morrow's work will be hard. Let every trembling soul begone. Ten thousand go. There are still too many. Go down to the spring of Harod. Everyone that lappeth water like a dog, these shall achieve the victory over Midian. Three hundred men in their eagerness lap up the water to quench their thirst. By these, says God, the victory shall come.

It is night. Mountains and vales are draped in darkness. Gideon and two others creep down to the edge of Midian's camp. The host is sleeping. No; not all. In one tent all are wide awake. An Arab soldier tells his dream. "A cake of barley tumbled in among the Midianites, and put them all to flight. This is nothing but the sword of Gideon." The listeners creep away.

Three companies surround the camp. Their armor is strange—lamps, pitchers, and trumpets. That is all. Their lamps are in their pitchers and their trumpets are as silent as death. In an instant three hundred pitchers are crashed upon the earth, three hundred lamps flare up around the camp, three hundred trumpets with piercing peal break the night's restful silence. Then a terrible war cry, "Jehovah and Gideon!" echoes about the camp. The sleeping host awakes. Every man's sword is turned against his brother. Through the darkness they flee for Jordan's fords. Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah, and Zalmunnah pay the penalties of war in blood and death. "Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more." The land had peace for forty years, during the days of Gideon, Manasseh's noblest hero and Israel's distinguished judge. His name in military lists ranks beside Leonidas, who with his noble Spartan band conferred undying fame on Greece. Israel's history, Israel's poetry, and Israel's sons luxuriate in allusions to Gideon and his courageous band.

IV.—THE WALL OF TEMPTATION

There was in reserve a greater glory for Gideon, and through him for Manasseh's tribe. A great temptation is placed before him. Before tempta-

tion many fall. Many heroes have been lost by listening to the siren's voice, that comes wafted by gentlest zephyrs with pleasing cadence to the ear. Temptation's gentle call has wrought ruin where ruder voices have failed. Several tribes of Israel can boast the honors of a royalty possessed. Manasseh alone can boast a royalty declined. It is great to be a king; it is sometimes greater to refuse a proffered crown and throne. It is glorious to rule a nation; it is more glorious to rule the kingdom of one's self.

Gideon comes back in the flush of victory. From the hidden threshing floor of Abi-ezer he has mounted in a day to national fame. His praises are proclaimed throughout the land. Behold the happy change! The homes of Israel are once more scenes of joy. Gardens bloom again; fields are tilled again; songs of gladness are heard in place of wailings of despair. Gideon is the instrument of it all. Many look not beyond the instrument. By just such fruit of victory heroes have been ruined.

The men of Israel say to Gideon: "Rule thou over us, thou and thy son and thy son's son also: for thou has delivered us from the hand of Midian." It was a crisis in Gideon's history. "No; I will not rule over you: neither shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you."

The noblest victory which earth's annals can record is achieved, not amid the clash of conflict,

but when the battle is fought and the war has ceased, and the veteran, satisfied with the consciousness of duty done, gladdened by the sight of a happy people, disdains a recompense, refuses the prize put within his grasp and urged on his acceptance. He is the hero who knows how to wear gracefully his well-earned laurels, and also how to keep those laurels fresh and green. The names of at least a few such men are household words. In the little galaxy of such superb brilliance there is no brighter star than Gideon.

A greater victory is not recorded in the Bible. A nobler scene is not portrayed by gifted pen. In the humble home at Orphah in Manasseh's tribe, surrounded by admiring crowds, Gideon greets his people; then, in view of a proffered scepter, crown, and throne, nobly triumphs when he proclaims that no earthly crown shall rest on his brow, nor on his son's. God is our King, and God alone.

XV

BENJAMIN

“ Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf :
In the morning he shall devour the prey,
And at night he shall divide the spoil.”

—GEN. 49: 27.

WE come now to consider Jacob's blessing on his youngest and last mentioned son, Benjamin, Rachel's son and Joseph's full brother. In tracing the historic fulfillment of the patriarch's words we shall note the heir, the inheritance, the historic scenes, and the heroes of the tribe.

I.—THE HEIR

Benjamin is the heir. His symbol is a wolf. There is scarcely any need to dwell on the meaning of this symbol. From childhood's early days we have all been familiar with the traits of this ravenous beast. We have all doubtless listened, till alarmed, not only to the stories of weird, spectral ghosts, but also to the equally thrilling tales of prowling wolves, till the name of wolf has come to suggest fierceness, rapacity, and cruelty. The pic-

ture drawn by Jacob seems to be this: a rapacious wolf, having his lair in the wooded hills, ever and anon descending from his safe retreat and lurking-place, prowling amid the valleys, watching his opportunity to fall upon his victim, tearing it cruelly and carrying his spoil to the fastness of the hills. Hence we have—Benjamin, of the fierce, relentless men of Israel. An echo of this note of Jacob's song is heard in Habakkuk's "fierceness of the evening wolves." Here are qualities which may be evil; but which may also be controlled and disciplined and rendered conducive to greatest good.

First, then, we are to notice what pertains to Benjamin, the heir of Jacob's blessing. Perhaps there are few instances of one whose name is so familiar of whom there is so little known. Let us enumerate the facts that make up Benjamin's recorded life.

He is the only son of Jacob born in the land of Canaan; like the Saviour, born in Bethlehem. Jacob with his household was journeying from Padan Aram, where all the other sons were born, toward Hebron, the patriarchal home where Isaac lived. The travelers stop at Bethlehem. Rachel gives birth to a son, and dies. With her last breath she calls the babe "Benoni"—"son of my sorrow." But this her last request was not granted. Jacob calls the boy Benjamin—"Son of my right hand." It is remarkable that the son of his right hand

should be the head of a tribe that was noted for left-handedness.

The motherless boy seems to have grown into the affection of all the family. Unlike Joseph, he seems not to have elicited the hatred of his brethren. Other than the fact that he seems to have been generally beloved, there is not the slightest trace in the Bible of his qualities as boy or man.

At the time of Jacob's removal with his family to Egypt Benjamin was no lad. Those pictures mislead us which portray him then as a beardless boy. The Bible statements are very different. At the going down to Egypt Benjamin was the father of ten sons. His family at that time, strangely, is the largest of all the families of Jacob's sons.

This is nearly all we know of Benjamin. How the symbol suited the man we have no means of knowing. Silent as Scripture is in reference to Benjamin, it is equally silent in reference to his tribe, until their settlement in Canaan. During all the years antedating that event there is not traceable a feature, or a trait, or an incident specially connected with the tribe. The ravaging wolf seems to have been asleep. His predicted powers, if he possessed them, seem to have been smitten with paralysis. Other tribes come into notice and achieve celebrity, but of Benjamin we hear nothing but the name in the roll-call of the tribes and in the routine of tribal appointments. Dry-shod the host

of Israel crossed the Jordan and camped in Canaan. In all the host there is no more obscure, less famous tribe than that of Benjamin. But the wolf is only sleeping. He will awake and arouse himself. Canaan once entered, with Benjamin all is changed. In place of long silence, no name is oftener heard than Benjamin's. The character of Benjamin's inheritance seems to have something to do with the development of his hidden powers. Let us then trace his inheritance.

II.—THE INHERITANCE

So unsuitable to the tribe seemed Benjamin's symbol through many long years of history, that it might almost have been forgotten. But now it shall be brought to mind again.

First.—The symbol is suggested by certain names of localities within Benjamin's inheritance. The tribe marches to its home, where for many generations it is to dwell. What is this wooded height close by which the men of Benjamin are passing? The hill of Shual, or "The Fox." What deep and wild ravine is this through which they march? Zeboim—"The Hyenas." As they survey their new, wild mountain home wolves and hyenas glare down upon them. Beasts of prey turn from their spoil and yield their mountain lairs to the tribe of whom Jacob long before had said words long for-

gotten, now remembered: "Benjamin shall ravin as the wolf." The literal wolves yield to the encroachment of the tribe of which they are the symbol.

Second.—Benjamin's inheritance lay between Judah and Ephraim, rival tribes. A quiet time he could not have. To live between two unfriendly neighbors, to listen to their complaints, hear their quarrels, heed their appeals, and arbitrate in all their difficulties, and keep on the best of terms with both, would be difficult indeed. But it would not be more difficult than for Benjamin to dwell in calm serenity between the fires of Judah and Ephraim. All through his history we find he scarcely knows whether to side with Judah or Ephraim. Ephraim was his full brother; but Judah's star was rising. Nothing is more irritating than to have one's home made the arena where others bring their conflicts and settle their difficulties or keep up their feuds. Benjamin was subjected to this cross-fire. Naturally enough he lost his temper and became as a ravening wolf.

Third.—The prominent features of his land invite our notice. Benjamin occupied a central position in Canaan. It was a high, broad tableland two thousand feet above the shore line of the Mediterranean Sea. Its southern boundary line ran through Jerusalem. It was twelve miles wide north and south and twenty miles long east and

west. With the aid of a little imagination we may consider it as a huge fortress in the midst of the land. It was elevated—a stronghold,—a key to all the land. History justifies us in the remark that the garrison that holds this great natural fortress of Benjamin, small though the garrison may be, shall have a potent influence in shaping the destinies of the nation. There are two features of this mountain fortress worthy of notice and remark: its mountain heights and its mountain passes; the narrow, precipitous defiles through which we may reach the tableland and the frowning heights which overlook and guard these mountain passes. There are two great passes—one on the east, rising from the Jordan valley; the other on the west, rising from Shephelah and Sharon's plains. At the highest point of each there is a crowning pinnacle, as if nature had summoned her majestic powers to guard the important mountain pass. These two passes are renowned in history.

III.—THE HISTORIC SCENES

1. *The Eastern Pass.*—Michmash. Jericho is at its base, Ai is at its height. Jericho has fallen, its walls have tumbled down. Israel holds the City of the Palms. Joshua sends his scouts to survey the heights. Jericho is in the lovely vale. Just back of it rises precipitately a mountain wall. Joshua

commands: "Go up and view the country." They ascend the pass and, emerging at its height, they stand before the crowning eminence called Ai. Unused to war, the scouts pronounce the capture of the city easy. Three thousand men advance. Up, up, they climb. But the men of Ai, secure in their mountain stronghold, and having perfect command of the pass, only waited for their victims. They waited till the aggressive Israelites put their hands on the city gate; then with all the advantage of position they fell on Joshua's three thousand men and smote them in their precipitate descent. Unhurt, the men of Ai return to their stronghold and laugh at the folly of their foe.

But let us see what strategy can do. Under cover of night, in the deep and shadowed ravine, thirty thousand men of Israel are cautiously and noiselessly climbing up that difficult path. Clinging closely to the mountain-side, hidden thus from view, they pass in the shadow of the city walls and go beyond. The morning dawns. The sentinel on the city walls has spied no foe. "All is well!" Through the murky air of morning the glad sound echoes through the mountain pass. But see! In the broad light of day Israel comes again up the pass, in great strength, nearer and nearer to the city gate. The men of Ai are confident of the strength of their walls,—confident of their power to defeat the foe with whatever numbers he may come up the

narrow pass. The city gate is opened. The soldiers sally forth to try the advancing foe. How feeble the resistance! They turn. They flee. The men of Ai with shout of victory pursue the routed host down the steep mountain-side. Down, down, they go.

Hark! The crackling flames enfold and illumine yonder heights. In dense columns the clouds of smoke rise. Ai is on fire. The ambushed men of Israel possess the city. The men of Ai have been decoyed from their stronghold and have fallen into the snare prepared for them. The foe is routed, the pass is open. Israel enters the pass and, if with wearied feet, yet with glad hearts, they climb the steep and rugged way until they camp not far from Ai on the sacred height of Bethel.

This is the spot where long ago Abraham and Lot had stood when they agreed to part for peace. Here Abraham heard the words divinely spoken: "All this land will I give thee." Here lonely Jacob slept high up on this mountain crest:

"Though like the wanderer,
Daylight all gone,
Darkness be over me,
My rest a stone."

Alone in the darkness Jacob rested his weary head on one of these stones. Here in dreamy vision rose the ladder heavenward.

2. *The Western Pass.*—As on the east there are the pass, the frowning fortress Ai, and the sacred height Bethel, so on the west there are the narrow pass, the frowning fortress Bethhoron, and the sacred height Gibeon. If we were on the tableland we might see Gibeon towering aloft and overlooking westward the plain by the sea. Right at Gibeon's base is Bethhoron, and from Bethhoron the great western pass descends towards the sea-board plain. Gibeon is second only to Hermon in height of the mountains of the land. From its summit there is spread out a charming scene. Eastward are seen the shining towers of Jerusalem. On Gibeon's height Richard the Lion-hearted said: "God forbid I should see Jerusalem unless I can rescue it from its enemies."

We may here trace the great battle of Bethhoron. Israel is camped at Gilgal. An embassy is announced—a communication from the Gibeonites, between whom and Israel an unholy alliance had been made. This alliance has provoked the enmity of all the Canaanites. The kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, have marshaled their hosts and are camped before Gibeon on the tableland. "Come up to us and save us and help us; for all the kings are gathered against us." Celerity of movement is often the secret of success. Once it had taken Joshua three days to march from Gilgal to Gibeon. It is nightfall now. They wait

not for the morning light. In the darkness they ascend the eastern pass and march all night long. When the morning dawns Joshua and his men confront the allied kings. The battle opens. It is fiercely fought. Victory attends the brave though weary men of Israel. The kings are put to flight with all their host. They flee down the western pass, in utter confusion—Israel in pursuit. The rout is complete. But the fruit of victory must not be lost.

The day is waning. Yonder sun is hastening toward the western skies. The green valley of Aijalon is waiting to welcome the fleeing hosts and cover them with the darkness of approaching night. Israel's chieftain is standing on an elevated spot in sight of all the host. See him. Oh, for a few hours more of light! Joshua lifts his hands to heaven, looks back to the heights of Gibeon still gilded by the lingering rays, looks forward to Aijalon, where the moon begins to shed her silvery light, and exclaims: "Sun, stand thou still on Gibeon; thou Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon." The Ammonites were all subdued. Five captive kings crowned the honors of the day.

On Gibeon's height long rested the Tabernacle of the Lord. Even when David removed the old tabernacle to Jerusalem, the altar of burnt offerings remained at Gibeon.

Such was the natural fortification of which

Benjamin found himself possessed in the allotment of Canaan. An impregnable stronghold; the garri-son—Benjamin. Here he might safely dwell. Hence he might descend as a prowling wolf, hither retreat to divide the spoil. The position gave to little Benjamin great prominence in the history of the land and nation. From the obscure and unknown tribe he rises to great fame. But, as often happens, that which was his glory proves well-nigh to become his ruin.

A fearful calamity befalls the tribe. In the sad story to which we turn we cannot but admire Benjamin's valor in his ruin, yet must lament that he should espouse a cause so unholy as that which wrested from him his great inheritance and almost blotted out his name from the earth.

A civil war is waged; Israel against Israel; a host against a handful. A crime has been committed on the heights of Benjamin. The Benjamites rally around the criminal, to defend him against the combined hosts of Israel. A bad cause it is, but certainly there was in it a spirit and valor worthy of a nobler cause. Four hundred thousand warriors besiege the stronghold Gibeah, where Benjamin is intrenched. Benjamin has twenty-six thousand men. Among them are seven hundred left-handed men that could sling a stone to a hairbreadth. Benjamin sallies forth, drives back the host and leaves twenty-two thousand men of Israel

dead on the field. The gallant little band return to their fortress and sleep upon their arms.

A sad time in Israel's camp when they ask: "Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?" The oracle said: Go. They renew the attack, are driven back, leaving eighteen thousand Israelites dead on the field.

A solemn fast is kept. On the morrow the attack is renewed, but in a different way. Benjamin in the heaven-built fort, and with the heaven-given valor, could forever defy the host of Israel. But he is caught in a snare. He forgot the story of the capture of the city Ai. An ambush is laid in the rear of Gibeah. The host march up and then return. Their flight was now a feint. Benjamin's eager men, pursuing, look back to see their fortress held by Israel and their cause now lost.

They fled. Smitten, slaughtered, rallying only to be destroyed, at last the brave little remnant determined yet to conquer or to die. Six hundred sought refuge in the rock Rimmon in the wilderness. How are the mighty fallen! Six hundred men alone are left of the tribe of Benjamin.

The tribe rallied, but never recovered from this terrific blow. Well might one of its heroes long afterwards say: "Am I not a Benjamite—the smallest tribe of Israel?" "Benjamin shall ravine as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey; at evening he shall divide the spoil." Unconquer-

able tribe! Though it could never rally from its fearful decimation, so much the more glory that from its thinned ranks and reduced numbers came so many of Israel's greatest heroes. To this tribe Israel often looked for leaders, and never looked in vain. For its size there was in it more fire, more genius, more heroism, more glory, more greatness, than in any other tribe of Israel.

IV.—THE HEROES

We can only mention a few of the men that shed a luster on their tribe.

1. *Ehud*.—Moab had defeated Israel. The Moabite king had built himself an elegant summer residence in the city of palm trees on the ruins of Jericho. There were his gardens and vines and walks and lattice and refreshing springs. A man alone walks up with a package in his hands. He asks to see the king, has a private message for the king—a present and a message. Ushered into the audience room, he lays the gift at King Eglon's feet. "I have a message for thee, O King." The servants are ordered out. The door is shut. Eglon and the messenger are alone. The stranger, left-handed as he was, drew his dagger and plunged it into Eglon, and left it in his body. He quickly went out, locked the door, and departed. Ere the king's household learned the fact the stranger was

sounding the trumpet of war on the heights of Ai. Victory crowned his exploit. Who is this stranger? Ehud, second judge of Israel, a hero of Benjamin's little tribe, perhaps himself one of the remnant six hundred.

2. *Saul of Gibeah*.—A King! The people ask of God a king. "Give us a king like the nations around us." Samuel assembled them at Mizpah to make their choice and crown their king. Whether by lot, or by Urim and Thummim, God would regulate their choice. The tribes are called. Shall the king come from Judah? No. One by one they are called, till Benjamin is taken. The decimated tribe of Benjamin shall furnish Israel's king. The family of Matri is taken, the house of Kish; and then on Saul the choice falls. But Saul is not there. Where is he? The oracle tells. They find him hiding under the baggage of the camp. He does not wish the office. He dreaded it. "Am I not of Benjamin, the smallest tribe?" There he stands towering head and shoulders above all the others. The people shout: "God save the king!" With all his faults, faults peculiar to a Benjamite, fierce, independent, rash, uncontrollable, Saul was a noble, heroic man. A man of mystery! Yet truly the symbol is fulfilled in him: a ravening wolf, devouring the prey, and dividing the spoil. Little Benjamin could never forget he furnished Israel's first king.

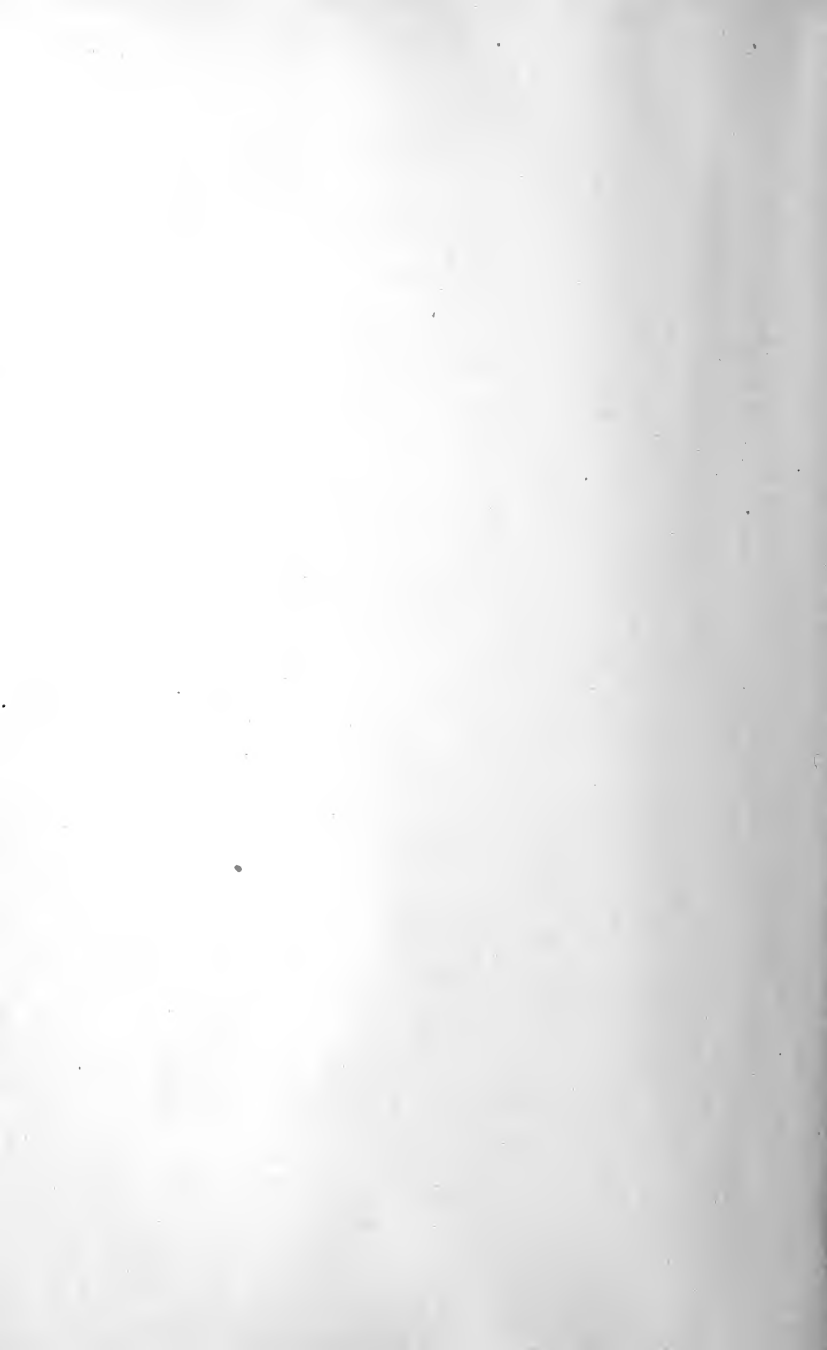
3. *Mordecai*.—Haman parades the streets of Shushan. By royal command the people bow in reverence at his approach. Universal adulation is paid to the satellite of the king. No; one man stands erect. Humble himself? Not he. Proud, scornful, haughty, he stands erect. One thousand mandates from the king cannot make him bend the knee then and there. No; he would sooner die. Who is he? Mordecai the Jew, of the unconquerable tribe of Benjamin.

4. *Esther*.—The brilliant queen of Ahasuerus attires herself with unusual care; puts on her most attractive robes; adorns her natural and exquisite beauty. She leaves the harem; stands at the king's door uncalled, an applicant for admission. Hear her firm resolve, uttered with all the spirit of her race, a people who would sooner die than falter: "If I perish, I perish; but I will go." It is Esther, the brightest heroine of Benjamin's heroic tribe.

5. *Saul of Tarsus*.—Once more, and only once, the light flares up ere it goes out into deep darkness. The glories of the tribe culminate in its last and greatest and noblest hero. The royal name once more appears. "Saul, who is also called Paul," has left the proud record in which he takes so great delight: "Of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin."

Breathing out threatening and slaughter, as a wolf, Saul of Tarsus is consenting to Stephen's

death. Armed with high commission "to devour the prey and divide the spoil," he rides toward Damascus to crush out the Gospel life. Then, transformed by divine grace, in him are seen these fierce qualities, not destroyed, but disciplined, directed, controlled. With the heroic spirit of his tribe he can say: "Bonds and afflictions await me: none of these things move me: neither count I myself dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." Illustrious hero of illustrious tribe! Well may the roll of Benjamin, in which are found the honored names of judge, warrior, king, and queen, conclude with him who claimed no regal title here, but delighted to subscribe himself "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ."





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